

## **SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY & BLOOD OF CHRIST 2022:**

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In Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (Sacrament of Charity), he wrote, "The Eucharist is a mystery to be believed, a mystery to be celebrated, and a mystery to be lived." A word on each aspect of this mystery.

### ***Belief***

Jesus is present to us in many ways – in his Word, in the poor, when two or three are gathered together in prayer, and in the sacraments. But in the Eucharist, Jesus is uniquely present – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. This is what we mean by the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

The meal is a major theme in Luke's Gospel. He references ten meals, seven before the Last Supper and two after the Resurrection. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus basically eats and drinks his way through the Holy Land on his journey to Jerusalem. Why was the meal such an important part of Jesus' ministry?

Sharing a meal together is more than simply eating together. Inviting others into our home for a meal means sharing our lives, sharing our very selves with them. A meal is a sacred time. Meals create and strengthen relationships. They can be a time of reconciliation. They are a time to give thanks.

The Eucharist is a meal *par excellence*. It is the source and summit of our Catholic Christian lives. There is power in the Eucharist. Or it can be just another meal. It depends on how we approach it. This leads us to the next mystery.

### ***Celebration***

These are different ways in which we eat meals, which we can compare to our celebration of the Eucharist. One format is a formal banquet. In preparation for such a meal, we dress up as we look forward to sharing fine food and drink. This analogy to the Eucharist is good in many respects. But sometimes Mass can be too stiff and formal. An example of this is parents sitting in the back of the church because they are worried about their children acting up and getting the "evil eye" from other parishioners. But sitting in the back simply makes things worse because kids can't see and participate from there very well.

Another example is eating a meal in a restaurant. The host provides the food preparation, the servers and the cleanup crew. The guests are customers, consumers. How many of us approach Mass as consumers? Do we participate actively, respond enthusiastically, and sing joyfully? Or are we simply passive observers? Do we just come to get something provided by others?

Then there is the potluck supper. As an image of the Eucharist, this is perhaps a bit too ordinary, but at least its participants are more involved in the meal. They would feel selfish and ungrateful if they didn't prepare and bring a dish. Do we prepare ourselves for Mass?

**Do we read the Scripture readings ahead of time? Do we arrive early to pray? Do we bring our best selves to Mass. Do we bring a sense of joyful anticipation?**

**There also is fast food. Is Mass for us like a trip to McDonalds? Do we want to get in, eat fast, and get out quickly? No music, no baptisms, no frills, no coffee and donuts. Do we view Mass as a prison sentence – doing time, obligation? Do we have only minimal engagement with fellow parishioners?**

**The family reunion is a good image of the Eucharist. These are times to rest, pray, listen, talk, remember and eat favorite foods with old friends, while at the same time welcoming new members. Family reunions provide opportunities for healing if family members are willing to set aside differences. This happens in our celebration of the Eucharist as well.**

**The Lord wants us to bring our best selves to the Eucharistic feast and to enter into the Mass as fully as possible. When we do so, there is tremendous power in the Eucharist. It can bring about miracles, as we see in the Gospel story of the multiplication of loaves and fish, which is a foretaste of the Last Supper.**

### *Live*

**The Eucharist is not only a mystery to be believed and a mystery to be celebrated, but also a mystery to be lived. We become what we believe, receive and celebrate. When we eat regular food, it becomes us; when we eat the Eucharist, we become it; we become Christ. When we are dismissed from Mass, we take Jesus into the world, into our daily lives. We are to be Christ for others – see Christ in them, share Christ with them.**

**At a recent Sunday Angelus, Pope Francis said: “We can evaluate our Eucharistic adoration according to how we take care of our neighbor like Jesus does. People hunger for food, but also for companionship, consolation, friendship, good humor, attention.” The Eucharist is spiritual and sacramental food for us and for those with whom we share it on our journey through this life and on our journey from this life to the next.**