

From the Desk of Father Jeff



Corpus Christi Sunday

Catholic Understanding of the Eucharist:

The Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life." At its core, the Eucharist is understood not merely as a symbol, but as the actual Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, truly, substantially, and really present under the appearances of bread and wine. This belief, known as the Real Presence, is the cornerstone of Catholic belief and has been known as such by the early church and the first Christians.

The origins of the Eucharist are found in the Gospels, specifically in the accounts of the Last Supper. On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus gathered with His apostles, took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." He then commanded them, "Do this in remembrance of me." This command, "Do this," is understood by the Catholic Church as the institution of the priesthood and the mandate to perpetuate this sacred meal through the ages.

Central to this understanding is the concept of transubstantiation. This theological term explains *how* the Real Presence occurs. During the consecration at Mass, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of the priest acting *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ), the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ. The "accidents" – the outward appearances, taste, smell, and texture – remain those of bread and wine, but their underlying substance is transformed. In paragraph 1376 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, it states, "The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: 'Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.'"

The Eucharist is primarily a sacrifice. It is not a new sacrifice, but the re-presentation of the one, unrepeatable sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary. When the priest offers the consecrated bread and wine, he is offering Christ Himself, truly present, to the Father. This offering unites the faithful with Christ's sacrifice, making present the grace and redemption won on the cross.

Through this sacrificial dimension, the Eucharist becomes the perfect act of worship.

Beyond being a sacrifice, the Eucharist is also a sacrament, one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ. As a sacrament, it is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace. The reception of Holy Communion confers immense spiritual benefits. It unites the communicant intimately with Christ, nourishing the soul and strengthening one's spiritual life. It forgives venial sins, preserves from future mortal sins, and deepens one's incorporation into the Church, the Body of Christ. The Eucharist is spiritual food for the journey of faith, sustaining believers as they strive to live a life in conformity with the Gospel.

The Eucharist fosters communion. It is the sacrament of unity, bringing believers together as one Body in Christ. When Catholics receive Communion, they are not only united with Christ but also with one another, forming the Church. This communal aspect extends beyond the visible Church on earth to the communion of saints in heaven. The Eucharist builds up the Church, strengthening its bonds of love and fellowship.

Preparation for receiving the Eucharist is crucial. Catholics must be in a state of grace, meaning free from mortal sin, and are to observe the Eucharistic fast (abstaining from food and drink, except water and medicine, for one hour before Communion). This preparation reflects the profound reverence due to the Real Presence of Christ.

Eucharistic Adoration at St. Catherine Labouré Parish:

Eucharistic Adoration is a profound Catholic practice stemming from the belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the consecrated host. Its importance lies in allowing the faithful to spend intimate, personal time in the physical presence of Jesus outside of Mass. This act of worship deepens one's relationship with Christ, fosters spiritual peace, and offers opportunities for quiet prayer, contemplation, and intercession. Many saints attest to its transformative power, recognizing it as a source of immense grace, strength, and a profound foretaste of heaven. It emphasizes that Christ remains "God with us" even after the Liturgy.

As a parish, we are in great need of individuals to sign up each week for an hour of adoration. We will have to decrease Eucharistic Adoration opportunities if signups do not increase dramatically soon. We currently offer Eucharistic Adoration each Wednesday from 7:30am to 6:45pm. Please sign up weekly at: <https://www.sclpqh.org/devotions>