

Nativity Catechism in a Year

July Discussion Guide by Michael Sanem
(covering sections 1333 – 1545)

I. We began our overview of the Sacraments of Initiation last month, and this month, we focus on the Eucharist. This is fitting because we've just begun the Parish Year of the Eucharistic Revival: "The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist." (1322) The teaching on the Eucharist is so rich and layered that I recommend you read this section of the Catechism, and this discussion guide will focus mainly on direct quotes from the text.

II. Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life."¹³⁴ "The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch." ... In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking." (1324-7).

- Do you remember your First Communion? Do you remember your most recent Communion? How do you approach the Eucharist?
- Would you consider our community a Eucharistic community? Why or why not? Is our "way of thinking attuned to the Eucharist" and does "the Eucharist in turn confirm our way of thinking"? Why or why not?
- Is the Eucharist the source and summit of your faith life? Why or why not?

III. The different names for the Eucharist highlight different aspects of it: "The inexhaustible richness of this sacrament is expressed in the different names we give it. Each name evokes certain aspects of it. It is called: **Eucharist**, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God. the Greek words *eucharistein*¹³⁹ and *eulogein*¹⁴⁰ recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim - especially during a meal - God's works: creation, redemption, and sanctification." **The Lord's Supper**, because of its connection with the supper which the Lord took with his disciples on the eve of his Passion and because it anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem.

- The word Eucharist means thanksgiving. Jesus said the blessing and *gave thanks* at the Last Supper. For what are you particularly grateful for today? How often do you share your gratitude with God? Do you have a daily gratitude practice where you pray and offer thanks to God?

- Jesus' operative image of heaven is the wedding feast. During his ministry, he practiced table fellowship with a wide variety of people. How is the practice of shared meals a part of your spirituality? Do you see God at work when you eat with others? Why or why not?

IV. **The Breaking of Bread**, because Jesus used this rite, part of a Jewish meal when as master of the table he blessed and distributed the bread, above all at the Last Supper. It is by this action that his disciples will recognize him after his Resurrection, and it is this expression that the first Christians will use to designate their Eucharistic assemblies; by doing so they signified that all who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him. The **Eucharistic assembly**, because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church. **The Holy Sacrifice**, because it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ the Savior and includes the Church's offering. the terms holy sacrifice of the Mass, "sacrifice of praise," spiritual sacrifice, pure and holy sacrifice are also used,¹⁴⁸ since it completes and surpasses all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

- St. Paul and the early disciples often referred to the Eucharist as the "Breaking of the Bread." Before the Gospels or Catechism were ever written, the Eucharist was practiced every week among the early Christians. Do you make this connection at Mass, that we are celebrating an ancient liturgy that predates the New Testament?

V. **The Holy and Divine Liturgy**, because the Church's whole liturgy finds its center and most intense expression in the celebration of this sacrament; in the same sense we also call its celebration the Sacred Mysteries. We speak of **the Most Blessed Sacrament** because it is the Sacrament of sacraments. the Eucharistic species reserved in the tabernacle are designated by this same name. **Holy Communion**, because by this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body. We also call it: the holy things (ta hagia; sancta) - the first meaning of the phrase "communion of saints" in the Apostles' Creed - the bread of angels, bread from heaven, medicine of immortality, viaticum.... **Holy Mass (Missa)**, because the liturgy in which the mystery of salvation is accomplished concludes with the sending forth (missio) of the faithful, so that they may fulfill God's will in their daily lives.

- Part of our Eucharistic Revival is a revival of participation in our liturgies across the country. How does liturgy and spirituality interact for you? How can you share your gifts with the community?