

LESSON 33: THE EUCHARIST

Instruction for Faith Educators

For Basic Level / Age 8	:	Cover points 1 to 6
For Intermediate Level / Age 11	:	Cover points 1 to 8
For Advanced Level / Age 14	:	Cover points 1 to 10

Revision from previous lesson:

In the past couple of lessons, we have been learning about the Sacraments. We have covered two of the important Sacraments that every believer needs to receive in order to enter fully into the Body of Christ. In this lesson, we learn about another very important Sacrament which a Christian should receive frequently: the Eucharist.

Current lesson:

1. When the Catholic Church worships God (Latin Rite Catholics called it the Mass), we are fed by the Word of God and nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ. What we receive looks like bread and wine, but in actual fact has become the Body and Blood of Christ when the priest prays the prayer of consecration over the bread and wine.
2. The Eucharist is not merely a sign or symbol of Jesus. It is Jesus Himself whom we receive in and through the Eucharistic species. The priest, through the power of his ordination and the action of the Holy Spirit, transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus. This process of change from bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is called transubstantiation (“change of substance”).
3. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine, Christ Himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: His Body and His Blood, with His soul and His divinity (CCC 1413).
4. Like all the other Sacraments, the Eucharist was instituted by Jesus Himself. Jesus’ institution of the Eucharist is described in Sacred Scripture (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:17-20).
5. Even prior to instituting the Eucharist in the Upper Room, Jesus had already spoken of the necessity of partaking of His Body and Blood when He was at Capernaum (John 6:51-55).
6. The CCC teaches that all Catholics who have received their First Holy Communion are welcome to receive Eucharist at Mass unless they are in a state of mortal/grave sin. Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the Sacrament of Penance (CCC 1415). The Church warmly recommends that the faithful receive Holy Communion when they participate in the celebration of the Eucharist; but even for those who do not receive Holy Communion regularly, it is compulsory to do so at least once a year (CCC 1417).

7. Effects of receiving the Eucharist:
- A) *It deepens our union with Christ* (CCC 1391). Jesus had already promised that whoever eats His Body and drinks His Blood remains in Him and He in them (John 6:56). When the People of God receive the Eucharist, it brings about the unity of the community and serves to strengthen the Body of Christ.
 - B) *It nourishes us spiritually* (CCC 1392). It “preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace [we] received at Baptism”.
 - C) *It separates us from sin* (CCC 1393-5). It cleanses us from past sins and preserves us from future sins. By feeding Himself to us, Christ also revives our love and enables us to break our disordered attachments and root ourselves in Him. And the more we share in the life of Christ through our reception of the Eucharist, the more it preserves us from committing mortal sins in the future.
 - D) *It unites us to the Church* (CCC 1396). Through the Eucharist, Christ unites those who receive His Body and Blood to all the faithful in one body, the Church. “Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism.”
 - E) *It reminds us of our commitment to the poor* (CCC 1397). Receiving the Body and Blood that Christ has given up for our sake means that we also recognise His presence in the poorest among us.
8. In the life of the Church, there were times when Jesus had chosen to manifest His presence in the Eucharist in a more tangible way than usual. Of course, the Catholic Church already believes that the consecrated Host is the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord, under the appearances of bread and wine. But there were moments when Eucharistic miracles took place, involving incidences in which the Host has “turned into human flesh and blood”. Interestingly, many of these Eucharistic miracles actually occurred during times of weakened faith. For instance, many Eucharist miracles took place as a result of someone doubting the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Some popular examples of Eucharistic miracles (among many others):

- A) *Lanciano, Italy (8th century)*: A priest had doubts about the Real Presence; however, when he consecrated the Host it transformed into flesh and blood. This miracle has undergone extensive scientific examination and can only be explained as a miracle. The flesh is actually cardiac tissue which contains arterioles, veins, and nerve fibers. The blood type as in all other approved Eucharistic miracles is type AB!
- B) *Bolsena-Orvieta, Italy (1263)*: A priest had difficulties believing in the Real Presence, and blood began seeping out of the Host upon consecration. Because of this miracle, Pope Urban IV commissioned the feast of Corpus Christi, which is still celebrated today.
- C) *Blanot, France (1331)*: The Eucharist fell out of a woman’s mouth onto an altar rail cloth. The priest tried to recover the Host but all that remained was a large spot of blood the same size and dimensions as the wafer.
- D) *Amsterdam, Holland (1345)*: The Eucharist thrown into fire overnight remained miraculously unharmed.
- E) *Siena, Italy (1730)*: Consecrated Hosts remained perfectly preserved for over 250 years. Rigorous scientific experiments have not been able to explain this phenomenon.

9. Transubstantiation is a theory used by St Thomas Aquinas (Doctor of the Church) in the 13th century to explain how the change takes place from bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Aquinas was borrowing the concept from the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle. It became authoritative Church teaching at the Council of Trent, 1545-63 (CCC 1376).

Ancient philosophers taught that everything in this world exists at two levels. “Accidents” are the physical and observable aspects of a thing, such as our hair, our skin, and our bodies. “Substance” is the invisible quality of a thing, such as the fact that you are a human being. In the Eucharist, the substance changes, rather than the accidents. Therefore, the substance of bread and wine have become the Body and Blood of Christ, but the accidents are still very much flour and fermented grape juice. Where the accidents also change into observable qualities like human flesh or human blood, it is a Eucharistic miracle.

Where Eucharistic miracles take place, they cannot be consumed and must be preserved for adoration/worship. To consume a Eucharistic miracle would be tantamount to cannibalism, since the accidents have transformed into human flesh and blood.

10. Read John 6:51-66. This was the occasion when Jesus spoke about the importance of eating His Body and drinking His Blood in the synagogue at Capernaum. Almost all His listeners misunderstood and thought that He was speaking of a kind of cannibalism. If Jesus had not meant exactly what He had said about the necessity of eating His Body and drinking His Blood, He would have stopped the disciples from going away from Him (because they were offended by what they thought He had said). But He did not stop them from leaving Him, for He meant exactly what He had said: “Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day.”



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