

## **The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist**

\* Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; . . . he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and . . . abides in me, and I in him".

- The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church's life, for in it Christ joins his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once for all on the cross to his Father; by this sacrifice he pours out the graces of salvation on his Body which is the Church.
- The Eucharistic celebration always includes: the proclamation of the Word of God; thanksgiving to God the Father for all his benefits, above all the gift of his Son; the consecration of bread and wine; and participation in the liturgical banquet by receiving the Lord's body and blood. These elements constitute one single act of worship.
- The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's Passover, that is, of the work of salvation accomplished by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, a work made present by the liturgical action.
- It is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice.
- Only validly ordained priests can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and the wine so that they become the Body and Blood of the Lord.
- The essential signs of the Eucharistic sacrament are wheat bread and grape wine, on which the blessing of the Holy Spirit is invoked and the priest pronounces the words of consecration spoken by Jesus during the Last Supper: "This is my body which will be given up for you.... This is the cup of my blood...."
- By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. 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 (cf.

Council of Trent: DS 1640; 1651).

- As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God.
- 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.
- Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ increases the communicant's union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins. Since receiving this sacrament strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ, it also reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.
- The Church warmly recommends that the faithful receive Holy Communion each time they participate in the celebration of the Eucharist; she obliges them to do so at least once a year.
- Because Christ himself is present in the sacrament of the altar, he is to be honored with the worship of adoration. "To visit the Blessed Sacrament is . . . a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, and a duty of adoration toward Christ our Lord" (Paul VI, MF 66).
- Having passed from this world to the Father, Christ gives us in the Eucharist the pledge of glory with him. Participation in the Holy Sacrifice identifies us with his Heart, sustains our strength along the pilgrimage of this life, makes us long for eternal life, and unites us even now to the Church in heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints.

### **What is This Sacrament Called and What does it do?**

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 for God's work of: creation, redemption (restoring our loving relationship with God), and sanctification (sending us Grace so we can live holy lives).
- It is also called 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 heavenly feast we will all one day attend with Jesus in heaven.
- It is also called 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.
  - It is also called The Holy Sacrifice, because it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ the Savior. Jesus came to bring us the message of salvation, the road map to get to heaven. He told us to love God with everything in us and love others. When His enemies arrested Him, He could have denied this teaching, gone away quietly to spare His own life. But He would not do that because He knew this was the truth that would save us-get us back to eternal life with God. So instead, He accepted the arrest, torture and crucifixion. He sacrificed Himself. Jesus asked God the Father to accept this sacrifice-offering of Himself- as a perfect sacrifice so that anyone who came to God seeking forgiveness and united themselves to Jesus would need only to offer God Jesus sacrifice –on their behalf – and have their sins forgiven and their relationship with God restored. So we see each Mass is a sacrifice offered for us again and again.
  - And it is commonly called 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., communion of believers.