

Building the Table of the Lord



The Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Christian Life

- The Eucharist is the spiritual center of Catholic life.
- The Eucharist is the source and summit (high point) of the Christian life.
- The Eucharist brings together in a single ritual all the important elements of the Catholic faith.
- In the Eucharist these saving actions are made present, and we are actually participating in these events! Through the words and actions of the priest, Jesus himself is blessing the bread and wine.

The Eucharist as Thanksgiving

- The word *Eucharist* comes from a Greek word meaning “thanksgiving.”
- In the Sacrament we give God thanks and praise for all that God has given us: life, love, family, friends, creation, and most important, Jesus’ sacrifice of love on the cross and the promise of the Resurrection.
- But in the spiritual realm, it isn’t just we who are praising and thanking God, it is Christ himself, with us and through the Holy Spirit.
- Through the Holy Spirit, our earthly praise and thanksgiving is joined to the perfect worship of God by the saints and angels in Heaven (see Revelation 19:1–5).

The Eucharist as Memorial Sacrifice

- Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we remember and make present the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- The meal Jesus shared on this occasion with his closest followers was the Jewish Passover meal. Jesus knew that his death was at hand, and he wanted to leave his disciples a sign of his continued presence with them.
- They understood that although the sacrifice of the original Passover lamb saved the firstborn from physical death, Jesus’ sacrifice saves us all from the eternal death that is separation from God. He is the new Paschal Lamb (see John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7).
- The saving power of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross strengthens us and renews us. It isn’t that we resacrifice Jesus; rather, we make his original sacrifice real and present during the Eucharist.

The Eucharist as the Presence of Christ

- The Church understood that Jesus wants us to repeat the ritual of the Last Supper, and that when we do so, he will be physically and spiritually present (see 1 Corinthians 11:23–26).
- He is present in the assembly, the people gathered as the Body of Christ. He is present in the Word, the Scripture readings that are proclaimed at every Mass. He is also present in the priest or bishop who presides over the Eucharist.
- But Christ is particularly present in the bread and wine, which, after the Consecration (the part of the Mass in which the priest prays over the bread and wine, repeating Jesus’ prayers from the Last Supper), become the Body and Blood of Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We actually receive Jesus Christ—physically and spiritually—when we receive the consecrated bread and wine, which become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

