

*The Eucharistic Life: Continuing the Incarnation*

Christ the King Parish

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**Eucharist as Personal Presence**

And the Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory,  
the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. —Jn 1:14

I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.  
—Jn 14:18

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the  
Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have  
commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.  
—Mt 28:19-20

At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic  
sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the  
Cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved  
Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a  
sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet, in which Christ is consumed, the  
mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.

—Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* §47



## **Eucharist as Communion: God, Neighbor, Self**

2007 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Sacramentum Caritatis*

The importance of Sunday as the *Dies Ecclesiae* brings us back to the intrinsic relationship between Jesus' victory over evil and death, and our membership in his ecclesial body.

On the Lord's Day, each Christian rediscovers the communal dimension of his life as one who has been redeemed. Taking part in the liturgy and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ intensifies and deepens our belonging to the one who died for us (cf. *1 Cor* 6:19ff; 7:23). Truly, whoever eats of Christ lives for him. The eucharistic mystery helps us to understand the profound meaning of the *communio sanctorum*. Communion always and inseparably has both a vertical and a horizontal sense: it is communion with God and communion with our brothers and sisters. Both dimensions mysteriously converge in the gift of the Eucharist.

"Wherever communion with God, which is communion with the Father, with the Son and with the Holy Spirit, is destroyed, the root and source of our communion with one another is destroyed. And wherever we do not live communion among ourselves, communion with the Triune God is not alive and true either"(Benedict XVI) Called to be members of Christ and thus members of one another (cf. *1 Cor* 12:27), we are a reality grounded ontologically in Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist, a reality that demands visible expression in the life of our communities.  
—*Sacramentum Caritatis* §76

## **Vertical Union (CCC §1127-29)**

§1127 Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of his Son's Church which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit. As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power.

§1128 This is the meaning of the Church's affirmation that the sacraments act *ex opere operato* (literally: "by the very fact of the action's being performed"), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that "the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God." From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them.

§1129 The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation. "Sacramental grace" is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature<sup>52</sup> by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior.

## **Horizontal Union**

Our Catechism therefore holds before us how (CCC §1397): "The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren..." and (quoting Chrysostom): "You have tasted the Body of the Lord, yet you do not recognize your brother... you dishonor this table when you do not judge worthy of sharing your food someone judged worthy to take part in this meal...God freed you from all your sins and invited you here, but you have not become more merciful" (John Chrysostom, Hom in 1 Cor 27.4).

St. John Chrysostom challenges each of us still: "Do you wish to honor the body of the Savior? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honor it in Church with silk vestments while outside you are leaving it numb, cold, and naked. He who said, 'This is my body' is the same that said, 'You saw me hungry and you gave me no food. As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' Honor, brothers, him by sharing your property with the poor. For what God needs is not golden chalices but golden souls" (On Mt 50.3; PG 58.508; Clement 121).

### Self-Integration

Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It.

—*Lumen Gentium* §11

Out of the darkness of my life, so much frustrated, I put before you the one great thing to love on earth: the Blessed Sacrament... There you will find romance, glory, honour, fidelity, and the true way of all your loves on earth, and more than that: Death. By the divine paradox, that which ends life, and demands the surrender of all, and yet by the taste -or foretaste- of which alone can what you seek in your earthly relationships (love, faithfulness, joy) be maintained, or take on that complexion of reality, of eternal endurance, which every man's heart desires. The only cure for sagging or fainting faith is Communion. Though always Itself, perfect and complete and inviolate, the Blessed Sacrament does not operate completely and once for all in any of us. Like the act of Faith it must be continuous and grow by exercise. Frequency is of the highest effect. Seven times a week is more nourishing than seven times at intervals. —Letter from J.R.R. Tolkein to his son

The unity of the Mystical Body: the Eucharist makes the Church. Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in the body—the Church. Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism... "If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord...To that which you are you respond "Amen"...Be then a member of the Body of Christ so your "Amen" may be true" (St. Augustine, sermon 272). —CCC §1396