

SESSION THIRTEEN

EUCCHARISTIC COVENANT

RETURN FROM EXILE

We left off with the prophet Ezekiel who finished prophesying around 570 BC. After Ezekiel died, the prophet Daniel received a vision from God that it would take about 500 years ("seventy weeks of years") for all the prophecies to be fulfilled (Dn 9:24-27). And so it did. (Jesus wasn't born until about 0 AD...)

During the time of the 3 great prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Ezekiel), Israel failed to live by the terms of the covenant and so Israel is sent into exile in Babylon. Around when Daniel had his vision, the Persians conquered the Babylonians. The Persians controlled the Middle East but were nicer than the Babylonians and let all the captured peoples go home, including the Jews.

The return from exile was done in several waves during the late 500s and early 400s BC. By 515 BC, the Jews had built another temple on the site of the old one. Although it was a shack in comparison to the beautiful building Solomon had built, at least they had a place to worship God again.

Overall, the return from exile was a mixed bag. On the positive side, the Jews had much of their land back and a temple to worship God. On the other hand, they didn't have a Davidic king on their throne, their temple was a disappointment, and there was no sign of the New Covenant or the glorious New Temple promised by the prophets.

In fact, the Jews weren't even able to rule themselves. First under the power of the Persians, after Alexander the Great swept through the Middle East they were ruled by him and his Greek-speaking successors.



FALSE HOPES

However, 2 events gave rise to false hopes that the predictions of the great prophets were about to be fulfilled.

In the 160s BC, the Jews revolted against the king (a successor of Alexander the Great) who took a hard stance against the Jews and tried to make them give up their religion. The Jewish revolt was led by a family of Levites known as the Maccabees. The Maccabees fought against the king's armies and eventually drove them out of Israel. For the next hundred years, the Maccabees ruled as kings and expanded the kingdom of Israel. Things were good for the Jews who had their kingdom, most of their land back, and a temple built.

There was just one problem: their kings had the wrong genealogy. The Maccabees were Levites, not sons of David. They weren't supposed to be ruling. There was no way they could fulfill the prophecies... And their power ended in 63 BC when the Romans captured Jerusalem and divided the land of Israel into several provinces.

Shortly after the Maccabees, the hopes of the Jews were raised once again. When the Maccabees were declining in power, Herod, a nobleman from the south, went to Rome and had himself declared king of Israel by the Romans.

Herod gained control of the Jews without much difficulty and reigned successfully for 30 years. He extended the borders of Israel almost to the size of the kingdom under David and Solomon. He also began to rebuild the temple on a massive scale even rivaling Solomon's temple of old. Again, things seemed to be going well for the Jewish nation. They were prosperous. There was just one problem: Herod had the wrong genealogy too. He wasn't a son of David and wasn't even a true Jew, as he was a descendant of Esau (Jacob's brother). There was no way he or his successors could be the fulfillment of all the prophecies. Their rule ended in 66 AD.

WATCH: Bible Project videos on Covenants

<https://bibleproject.com/learn/covenants/>

JESUS: COVENANTAL CLIMAX

The New Testament with the Gospel of Matthew begins with:

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Mt 1:1)

For most modern Americans genealogies are boring.

But if you were an ancient Jew and you've been waiting around for hundreds of years for a man with the right bloodline, this genealogy is anything but boring!

Matthew doesn't just call him "a son of..." but rather "the son of..." David and Abraham.

There were many sons of Abraham as every Jew was a son of Abraham.

There were also other descendants of David around.

But he wasn't just any descendant of David and Abraham.

He was the promised son of David and Abraham, the son who would fulfill all the promises.

By calling Jesus "the son of David, the son of Abraham," Matthew is talking about the fulfillment of all the expectations associated with each of the great covenants we have looked at in the Old Testament.

ADAMIC COVENANT

As we have previously learned, Adam was the father of the human race and the model human being who had the 5 roles of son of God, king, priest, prophet, and bridegroom.

Jesus is the "father" of a new race of humans, and if we read the Gospels carefully we see repeated signs that Jesus holds all 5 Adamic roles.

With Jesus, we begin a new chapter in the history of humanity. In fact, it is an entirely new beginning. As St. Paul says, *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation"* (2 Cor 5:17).

Likewise, St. John begins his gospel with the words *"In the beginning was the Word,"* which are an imitation of the opening line of Genesis: *"In the beginning God created."*

St. John's point is that Jesus marks a radical turning point in human history, like the world has started all over and the Gospel is a new beginning and a new Genesis.

St. Matthew makes the same point in beginning with "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ" because the phrase "the book of genealogy of..." has otherwise only been used for Adam (Gen 5:1).

Together St. Matthew and St. John are suggesting Jesus is a new Adam, and the Gospel is a new beginning and creation.

A PORTRAIT OF JESUS

What better way to get a picture of how Jesus fulfills the was than to create it ourselves!
Start by drawing Jesus (a stick figure is still art!) in the frame, then follow the steps
on the following pages to add symbols to represent each of the roles of Adam.

1. A SON OF GOD

Jesus is the actual Son of God as He was conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

God the Father confirms Jesus' sonship at His Baptism, when He speaks in an audible voice from heaven:
"This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17).

God the Father also repeats this at Jesus' Transfiguration (Mt 17:5).

Because of his special sonship, Jesus calls God his 'Father' or "Abba" (Hebrew), especially while praying (Mt 6:9; 11:25-27; 14:6).

DRAW:

To indicate he is the son of God, make his face shining with God's glory by drawing beams from his face.

2. A KING

Of course, it is clear that Jesus is King, the Son of David. Both Matthew (Mt 1:1-17) and Luke (Lk 3:23-38) provide Jesus' genealogy going back to David.

The angel Gabriel told Mary before his birth,

"The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever." (Lk 1:32-33)

During his lifetime many people recognized his royalty, calling Him "Son of David" especially after He performed miracles like exorcisms (Mt 12:23, 15:22).

Nearing the time of his death, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, intentionally imitating the great king Solomon (Mt 21:2-7; Kgs 1:38-40).

Ironically, even the Roman governor Pilate officially recognizes Jesus as the "King of the Jews" and has that title posted above Jesus on the cross (Jn 19:19-22).

DRAW:

Crown Jesus as king by drawing a crown on him.

3. A PRIEST

Jesus' role as priest is harder to see, but it is there.

When the Pharisees challenge Jesus for breaking their Sabbath rules about rest, He says,

"Have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath, and are guiltless?" (Mt 12:5)

Jesus points out that priests are allowed to work on holy days implying that Jesus Himself is a priest and has priestly rights.

At his crucifixion, the apostle John mentions that Jesus' tunic

"was without seam, woven from top to bottom" (John 19:23).

This detail was important because the robe of the High Priest in ancient times was woven without seams thereby making Jesus' garment a sign of his high priestly role.

4. A PROPHET

No one doubted that Jesus was also a prophet.

When Jesus asks His disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" the disciples provide a list of various prophets:

"Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. (Mt 16:13-15).

Jesus also calls Himself a prophet after being scorned by the people of his own hometown saying:

"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." (Mt 13:57).

When Jesus rides into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the crowds say,

"This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee" (Mt 21:11).

5. A (BRIDE)GROOM

Jesus was and is the Bridegroom.

When questioned about Jesus, St. John the Baptist said,

*"I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.
He who has the bride is the bridegroom;
the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him,
rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice;
therefore this joy of mine is now full." (Jn 3:28-30)*

Jesus also suggests Himself He is the 'Bridegroom' when He tells the parables about the Kingdom of God based on wedding images (Mt 22:2; Mt 25:1).

Jesus is the New Bridegroom, who offers Himself in marriage to all humanity through the Church, His bride.

DRAW:

To indicate he had a priestly role, draw a stole on Jesus. A stole is the vestment priests wear around their neck (looks like a scarf).

DRAW:

Since the role of a prophet is to speak, give Jesus a big mouth.

DRAW:

Since he is a groom, give Jesus a ring on his ring finger to symbolize His marriage to the Church.



**A PORTRAIT OF JESUS
BY**

NOAHIC COVENANT

The Gospel authors do not devote much to the relationship between Jesus and Noah. But Noah himself was primarily a new Adam character, a second father to the whole human race. So all Jesus' Adamic characteristics also connect Him to Noah.

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

St. Matthew begins his gospel by calling Jesus "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." Abraham's heir and only son by his first and legitimate wife Sarah was Isaac.

Calling Jesus "*the* Son of Abraham" sets up a comparison between Jesus and Abraham's son Isaac. The parallel is strong, especially considering Isaac's near-sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Isaac's near-sacrifice was a 'mime' of Jesus on Calvary seen in how the one and only begotten son carries the wood of sacrifice up the mountain, where he is laid on the wood and offered to God out of love for his father.

The covenant with Abraham is finalized by God after the sacrifice of Isaac who then promises Abraham **"and by your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."** Jesus is the one promised "seed of Abraham" through whom blessing is going to come to all the nations of the earth.

MOSAIC COVENANT

The Mosaic Covenant got messed up pretty badly during the wilderness wanderings (9 rebellions) so that Deuteronomy became the 3rd and final making of the covenant through Moses.

One of Moses' last promises was that a great prophet like himself would come some day:

"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren: you must listen to him!" (Dt 18:15).

This can be understood 2 different ways as the word "like" can mean "similar to" or "equal to". In one sense, Moses' words applied to all the prophets because they were all "similar to" Moses.

However, none of the prophets were *equal* to Moses. The last words of Deuteronomy (Dt 34:9) stress, *"And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."* Moses was the greatest prophet but he only saw God's back (Ex 33:18-23).

St. John in his Gospel asserts that Jesus is not only *equal* but also *superior* to Moses:

"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has made him known." (Jn 1:17-18)

So not only has Jesus seen God, but Jesus *shows* us God. When you look at Jesus, you see God's face. As Jesus says to Philip at the Last Supper, *"He who has seen me, has seen the Father."* (Jn 14:9) Jesus comes as a prophet *like* Moses but even greater than Moses.

JESUS > MOSES



NEW LAW > OLD LAW

Like Moses, Jesus goes up on a mountaintop in order to teach people God's law (Mt 5-7). But Jesus goes beyond Moses and even corrects defects Moses had allowed into the Law.

- While Moses permitted divorce because of the "hardness of heart" of the Israelite men (Dt 24:1), Jesus restores marriage to God's original plan of permanence (Mt 5:31-32)
- While Moses permitted (and even in a sense commanded) hatred for enemies, Jesus corrects that with a universal command of love (Mt 5:44-45)

EUCCHARIST > MANNA

Like Moses, Jesus also provides the people with supernatural "bread from heaven" (Ex: 16; Jn 6:1-14). When the people witness Jesus multiplying the loaves, they say,

*"This is indeed **the prophet** who is to come into the world"* (Jn 6:14).

What they mean by "the prophet" is "the prophet like Moses" of Deuteronomy 18:15.

However, unlike the manna in the wilderness, the bread of Jesus leads to eternal life (Jn 6:51-58).

THE PASSION > PASSOVER

Like Moses, Jesus establishes a Passover for the people of God (Ex 12-13; Lk 22:7-30).

But the sacrifice of Moses' Passover was just a sheep, and the blood of animals can't take away sin.

The sacrifice of Jesus' Passover is his very self, and his blood permanently washes us of sin (Jn 1:29).

HEAVEN > PROMISED LAND

Moses was replaced by *Y'shua* (a.k.a. Joshua) who did what Moses failed to do: he led the people into the Promised Land.

In the New Testament, there comes another *Y'shua* (a.k.a. Jesus) who does what Moses and his covenant could not do: bring God's people into the Promised Land of Heaven.



DAVIDIC COVENANT

Jesus fulfilling his Adamic role of king also points to Jesus as the Son of David who fulfills the covenant of David.

The Davidic Covenant had 4 promises:

1. David will have a son and heir
2. this son will build the Temple of God
3. this son will also be the Son of God
4. this son will rule over the kingdom of David forever

Solomon was an initial fulfillment of these promises:

- David's own son & heir
- built a stone Temple for God
- was adopted as a Son of God according to the covenant
- ruled for a long time

The Gospels tell the story of Jesus and how "*one greater than Solomon is here*" (Mt 12:42).

The 2 genealogies of Jesus (in Mathew 1 & Luke 3) emphasize Jesus as David's true son.

Jesus is not only a true biological son of David (through Mary) but also the one with the right to claim the throne: he is both *son* and *heir*.

Yet, at the same time both Matthew and Luke insist Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, so that Jesus is the true Son of God (not just by adoption).

As the covenant with David said, "*He will be my son, and I will be his father*" (2 Sm 7:14).

TEMPLE

Solomon built a Temple or house of stone for the worship of God, but that Temple was torn down. Moreover, God doesn't really live in stone buildings making a need for a better temple.

When Jesus drives the moneychangers out of Herod's temple in the Gospel of John, the Jews are offended and said to him:

"What sign have you to show us for doing this?"

Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

The Jews then said, 'It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?'

But he spoke of the temple of his body." (Jn 2:18-21)

Jesus gives us a better temple than Solomon: a living temple, the temple of His body.

Since a temple is where God dwells, this means that God's presence dwells in Jesus' own body. However, since Jesus gives us his body to eat in the Eucharist and "you are what you eat" then we too become temples of God.

Since the Church is the Body of Christ and made of its members, then the Church is also a temple. This is a temple that cannot be torn down and will never pass away.

Even when they tried to destroy the new temple, Jesus' body, God wouldn't let it happen.

He "raised up" Jesus from the grave, and the Church Fathers saw this as a fulfillment of the promise to David that God would "raise up" David's seed after him (2 Sm 7:12).

And once raised up, Jesus ascended to Heaven where He rules over the kingdom forever.

The prophecy of Jeremiah is also fulfilled:

"David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel." (Jer 33:17)

Only Jesus as King fulfills what was promised to David and prophesied by Jeremiah.



THE NEW COVENANT

The New Covenant promised by the Prophets did involve the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. In addition, the 3 great prophets foresaw:

- **Isaiah:** God's special suffering servant actually *becoming* a covenant
- **Jeremiah:** the law being written on people's hearts
- **Ezekiel:** a new Spirit being poured out on God's people.

In the "Institution Narrative" (the part that narrates the institution of the Eucharist) in Luke's Gospel, Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Passover meal during which He:

"Took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given up for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'
And likewise, the cup after supper, saying,
*'This cup which is poured out for you is **the new covenant in my blood.**'* (Lk 22)

This is one of the most important events in human history.

This is a turning point as we move from the Old Covenant (Mosaic) to the New Covenant.

The connections between the New and Old include that Jesus is celebrating the Passover and that Jesus refers to the sacrifices at Sinai when Moses confirmed the Old Covenant.

At the foot of Sinai, Moses sprinkled the blood of the lambs on God's altar and the people saying,

"Look! The blood of the covenant!" (Ex 24:8).

Jesus says something similar, only this time it's 'my' blood and the covenant is 'new'.

The covenant relationship with God is being completely remade.

In saying "new covenant", Jesus is referring to Jeremiah's prediction in Jeremiah 31:31.

Jesus continues: *'The New Covenant **in my blood**'* or "consisting of my blood" implying His body too.

In consisting of his body and blood, the New Covenant consists of His very self and so what Isaiah predicted is coming true: the servant of God is *becoming the* covenant itself (Is 42:6).

In this way, the New Covenant prophesied is fulfilled in the Eucharistic covenant.

COMPLETED ON THE CROSS

What Jesus began at the Last Supper he completed at the cross.

At the Last Supper, He gives His body and blood in sacramental form.

At the cross, he gives His body and blood physically.

At the beginning of the Last Supper, Jesus speaks about

"not drinking the fruit of the vine again until the Kingdom of God comes" (Lk 22:18).

For early Christians, the accounts of Jesus' last Passover seems incomplete as Luke's account only describes Jesus drinking the second and third cups of wine although 4 cups were standard at the Jewish Passover ceremony.

Strangely, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays that *"this cup may pass from me"* (Mk 14:36).

Then Judas shows up with a gang of soldiers and Jesus is arrested, suffered, and was crucified.

At the cross, the soldiers offer Jesus a crude form of wine as a pain reliever.

The first time Jesus refuses (Mt 27:34), but the second time he drinks! (Mt 27:48; Jn 19:29)

According to the Gospel of John,

"When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished';

and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." (Jn 19:28-30)

But wait, Jesus said He would not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes?

And what does Jesus mean by 'it is finished'? What is 'finished'?

Several scholars suggest Jesus is referring to the Passover ceremony being finished, with the fourth and final cup missing from the Last Supper being the wine He drinks on the cross.

In this way, the unbloody gift of Himself at the Last Supper is linked to the bloody gift of Himself on the cross as one worship ceremony, one liturgical act.

The fact that Jesus drinks on the cross also indicates that the Kingdom of God has arrived.

Although in the darkness of Calvary and with Jesus dead, it does not seem like it.

Yet we should remember that the creation of the world began in darkness.

Likewise, the dawn of the kingdom of God, the new creation, arrives in the darkness and emptiness on Cavalry.





THROUGH BLOOD & WATER

St. John reports something rather unusual he saw from the foot of the cross:

"One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water."
(Jn 19:34)

Jews' in Jesus' day would have been familiar with a stream of blood and water.

During Passover, thousands of lambs were sacrificed in the temple, and lambs' blood drained out the side of the Temple Mount and down into a stream called the Kidron below.

So Jews visiting Jerusalem at Passover would see a stream of blood and water flowing from the temple.

In John 2, Jesus had said,

"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. But he spoke of the temple of his body."

Jesus' body is the living temple, and it is flowing with the blood and water of the Passover.

The prophet Ezekiel also had a famous vision of the new temple of end times, with a miraculous river called the river of life flowing out from it.

That river of life is the Holy Spirit, which flows from the body of Christ.

The blood and water from Jesus' body on the cross was not the Holy Spirit itself but rather a sign or symbol of the living river of the Spirit that was unleashed for us by Jesus' death.

The sacraments are visible signs or symbols of God's invisible grace given to us through the Holy Spirit.

So the blood and water from the side of Christ also stand for the sacraments:

the Eucharistic blood and the water of Baptism through which the Holy Spirit comes to us.

The prophet Jeremiah promised that the law would be written on the heart in the New Covenant.

St. Thomas Aquinas says that the new law of the New Covenant is the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit dwells in us, making us living temples, and guides us, teaching us right from wrong.

St. Peter preaching to the crowds about Jesus and the salvation he offers said:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:37-38)

St. Peter urges them to be baptized and connects baptism to the forgiveness of sins.

Baptism is the "sprinkling with clean water" to cleanse from "uncleanness" or sins, and the Holy Spirit is the "new spirit" received.

Baptism is a spiritual rebirth and how we become children of God.

With the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have come full circle in salvation history.

The divine sonship that Adam enjoyed in the Garden, the relationship of sonship to God has been given back to all human beings.

Through the Eucharistic Covenant, Jesus' offering of Himself at the Last Supper and on the cross, we get total forgiveness of sins and cleansing from shame.

We get an indwelling of the Holy Spirit, causing us to love God's laws and to walk in His ways.

We trust that a renewed world is coming where peace and righteousness will reign forever under the rule of King Jesus. And it's all possible because of Jesus, the perfect covenant-keeper.

THE EUCHARISTIC COVENANT

Through the Eucharistic Covenant,
Jesus' offering of Himself at the Last Supper and on the cross,
we get total forgiveness of sins and cleansing from shame.

The divine sonship that Adam enjoyed in the Garden,
the relationship of sonship to God has been given back to all human beings.
The new, true temple is the Body of Christ and so the Church as Jesus' Body
and its members are all mini-temples of the Holy Spirit.

GOD'S PART

Jesus offered Himself
at the Last Supper and on the cross
for forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus is a living temple,
the temple of His body.

CHURCH'S PART

Through our Baptism,
we get spiritual rebirth
and become children of God.

The Church as Jesus' Body is a temple,
and its members are all mini-temples
of the Holy Spirit.

Mediator: Jesus

Mountain: Calvary (Zion)

Organization: Church

Scripture: Luke 22:14-32

Jesus is the fulfillment of all the expectations associated
with each of the great covenants we have looked at in the Old Testament

REFLECT

Reflect on the sufferings of Jesus and how God himself was willing to absorb humanity's violence and foolish history. What questions, thoughts, or feelings come up for you as you reflect on this?

For the ancient Jews, the genealogy of Jesus was key to understanding who He was.

- *Do you know your own family history?*
- *How might knowing it help you better understand who you are?*

DISCUSS

Have you ever thought of the Eucharist as a covenant before?

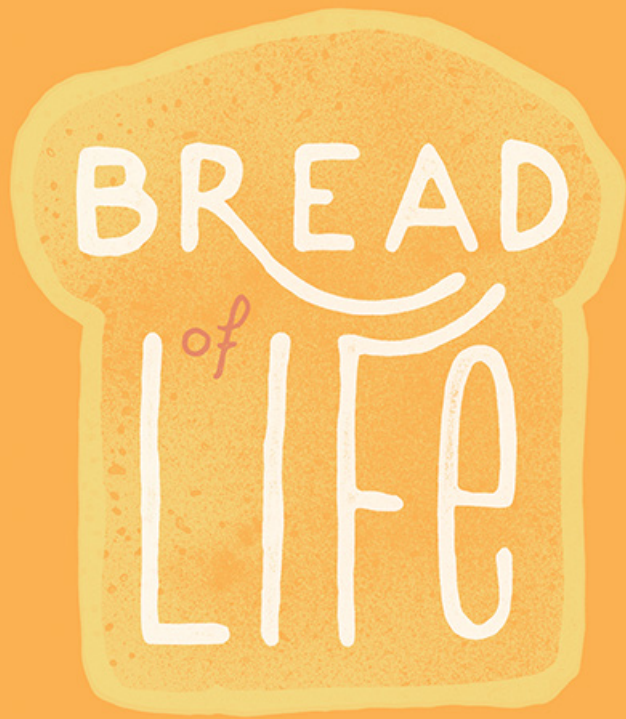
CHALLENGE

PRAY:

Attend in-person at Church or pray through at home the Stations of the Cross.

DO:





SESSION FOURTEEN

BREAD OF LIFE



GIVE US THIS DAY

Our Daily



Bread

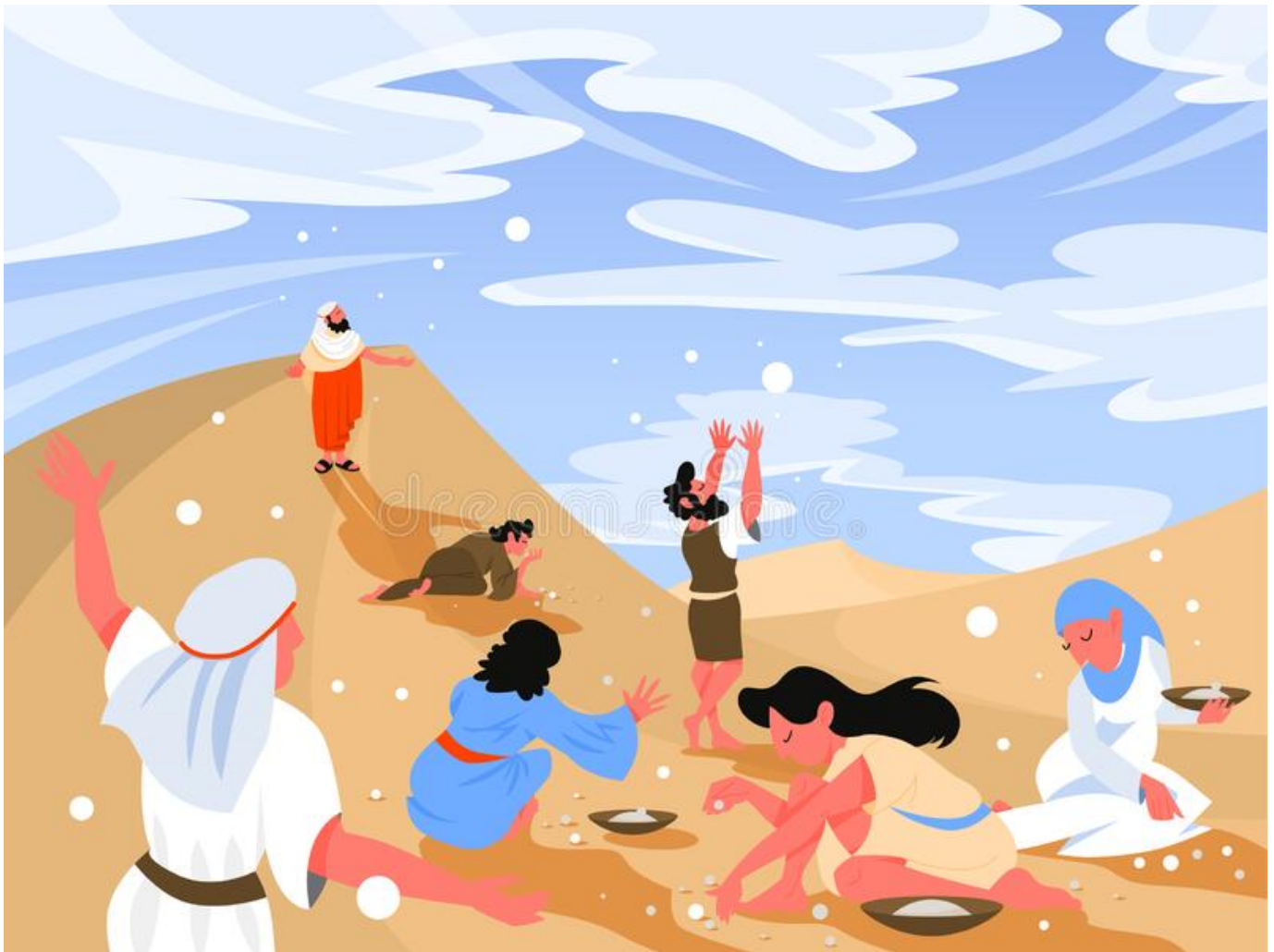
MATTHEW

6:11

MANNA

When Moses and the Israelites were wandering in the desert, God took care of them. While they were in the desert and were in need of food, God sent "manna" from heaven for their "daily bread" and he sent it every day but on the Sabbath (he sent x2 the day before). Without God providing for them, the people would have starved to death, but He wanted them to see that He would take care of them forever.

God gave the Israelites food and drink the whole time they were journeying to the Promised Land. Not once did God let His people down, but they did not always listen to God. God knew that He would have to do something bigger in order to save His people.



READ: JOHN 6: 22-71



BREAD OF LIFE

For most of Jesus' public life people crowded around Him.
If He was teaching in the synagogue, they crowded around Him.
If He was walking down the street they crowded around Him.
Even when he withdrew to a deserted place with His disciples, the crowd heard and followed Him leading to Jesus miraculously feeding the crowd of 5,000 with loaves of bread and fish.

But there were 2 times when people fled from Jesus.
The obvious one was after his arrest and crucifixion. Where were all the crowds that followed Him? Nowhere to be found. (Even Peter denied knowing Jesus...)

The other time people fled from Jesus was when He spoke to them about the Eucharist, which is often called the Bread of Life Discourse in the Gospel of John.
Jesus gives this teaching after the feeding of the 5,000 saying that the crowd was there not because they have seen signs and believe in Him but because they ate and were filled.
They thought Jesus was the prophet like Moses, for he provided them with "bread from heaven."
However, unlike the manna in the wilderness, the bread of Jesus leads to eternal life.

In the first half, Jesus says "believing" in Him will open eternal life to us.

*"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger,
and whoever believes in me will never thirst."* (John 6:35)

This leads to murmurings from the crowds and confusion, but believing in Jesus' divinity is necessary to receive the second half of the discourse where Jesus explicitly teaches about consuming His flesh and blood (Jn 6: 48-58).

FROM BELIEVING TO EATING

Rather than dialing back, Jesus intensifies his claim by using the "Amen, amen" formula, which is like saying "Pay attention. Listen carefully and don't miss what I am about to say."

"Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died;

this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die." (John 6:47-48)

Arguments ensue, but Jesus doubles down saying:

"Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life within you." (Jn 6: 53-54)

In addition, the Greek words that Jesus uses also intensify His claim.

In earlier verses (Jn 6:49-53), St. John uses "phago" or the ordinary Greek word for eating.

But as Jesus continues, the stronger Greek verb "trago" meaning to "gnaw" or "munch" is used.

This shift is meant to remove all confusion about what He is saying.

Jesus is not speaking in a figurative or metaphorical way: He's speaking literally.

FROM FOLLOWING TO LEAVING

Jesus isn't proposing cannibalism or violating the Old Testament prohibitions against drinking blood from lower forms of life. It is His glorified body that will be shared with us sacramentally through a special work of the Holy Spirit.

But for those who don't believe in Jesus' divinity, this is a hard mystery to grasp.

Immediately after this, we read in the Gospel:

"When many of His disciples heard it, they said, "This is a difficult teaching; who can accept it?"

... As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him." (Jn 6:60, 66)

Jesus didn't do anything to stop them from leaving. He didn't say "Oh come back. I was just kidding."

No, he turned to his disciples, and said, "*Do you also want to leave?"* (Jn 6:67)

Peter responded saying, "*Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."* (Jn 6:68)

Jesus asks us the same thing today, will you flee from Jesus or remain by His side?



WATCH: Fr. Mike Schmitz

"The Hour That Will Change Your Life" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwwilkrLxTM>

THE REAL PRESENCE

The Eucharist is at the core of our faith, the "source and summit of Christian life" (CCC 1324). What sets the Catholic Church apart from other Christian faiths is the belief in the real presence: the belief that Jesus is really and truly present in the Eucharist.

At the Last Supper, Jesus *"took the bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'"* (Lk 22:19)

As Catholics, we take Jesus at His word.

At Mass on Sunday, the priest extends His hands over simple bread and wine and asks the Holy Spirit to transform them into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Some people say that the bread and wine are just a symbol Jesus' body and blood.

As Catholics, we believe it is real and Divine Revelation gives evidence it is not just a symbol.

The Scriptures don't suggest the symbol. Jesus didn't say,

"Unless you eat a symbol of my flesh and drink a symbol of my blood you will not have life."

In addition to Scripture, Divine Revelation includes Tradition and from the earliest times Christians have believed that the Eucharist was the body and blood of the Risen Jesus, and not just a symbol.

Can it be proven scientifically? No. Not everything can be explained scientifically.

If you could prove everything scientifically, there would be no mystery and no need for faith.

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, *"What our sense fail to fathom, let us grasp through the consent of faith."*

WHAT IS REAL PRESENCE?

Real presence means Jesus Christ is really, truly present in the consecrated bread and wine at Mass.

WHAT IS TRANSUBSTANTIATION?

Transubstantiation is the changing of simple bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus. This takes place at the consecration during Mass.

WHAT IS CONSECRATION?

Consecration means "to make holy".

When the priest consecrates the bread and the wine at Mass transubstantiation occurs.

To consecrate the bread and wine, the priest speaks the Words of Institution or the words Jesus said at the Last Supper when he instituted or established the Eucharist.



Pope Francis consecrating the wine into the blood of Christ.

EUCCHARISTIC MIRACLES

You might be thinking to yourself, "I'm not sure if I believe that Jesus is truly present in the host." You wouldn't be the first person to have doubts. Great faith and great doubt often go hand in hand.

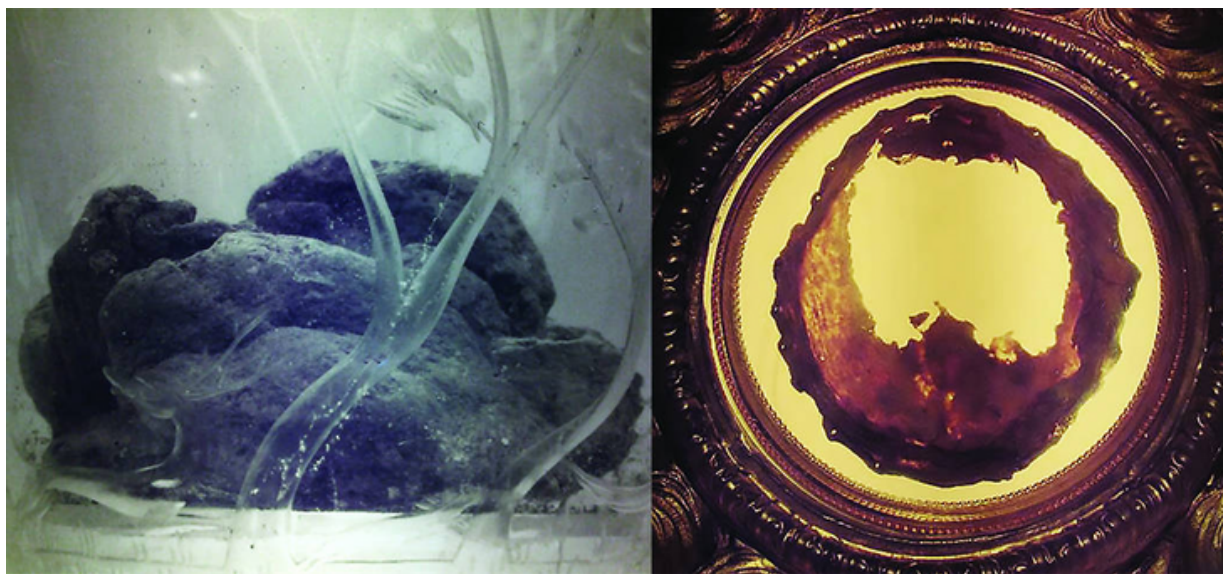
There was a priest who lived in Lanciano, Italy, around the year 700, who was plagued with doubts about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist... until one day.

The priest was celebrating Mass, even though he was filled with doubts about the real presence. As he said the words of Consecration, the bread changed into living flesh and the wine changed into blood before his eyes.

Today, you can go to Lanciano and see the flesh and blood that has remained there for more than 1,300 years.

The flesh and blood have been studied by scientists on a number of occasions. They have found that the blood is real and the flesh is real human muscular tissue from the heart, and there is no evidence of preservatives or any other chemical agents present.

This is one of thousands of Eucharistic miracles that have been documented throughout the life of the Church.



The Eucharistic miracle in Lanciano Italy in the 7th c. is the earliest recorded Eucharistic miracle and the most famous. The consecrated host transformed into a piece of a human heart (Right). The consecrated blood coagulated into 5 walnut-sized globules (Left).

EUCCHARISTIC MIRACLES NOTES

**DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH AND TAKE NOTES ON SOME OF THE EUCCHARISTIC MIRACLES.
DO YOU FIND THEM CONVINCING? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

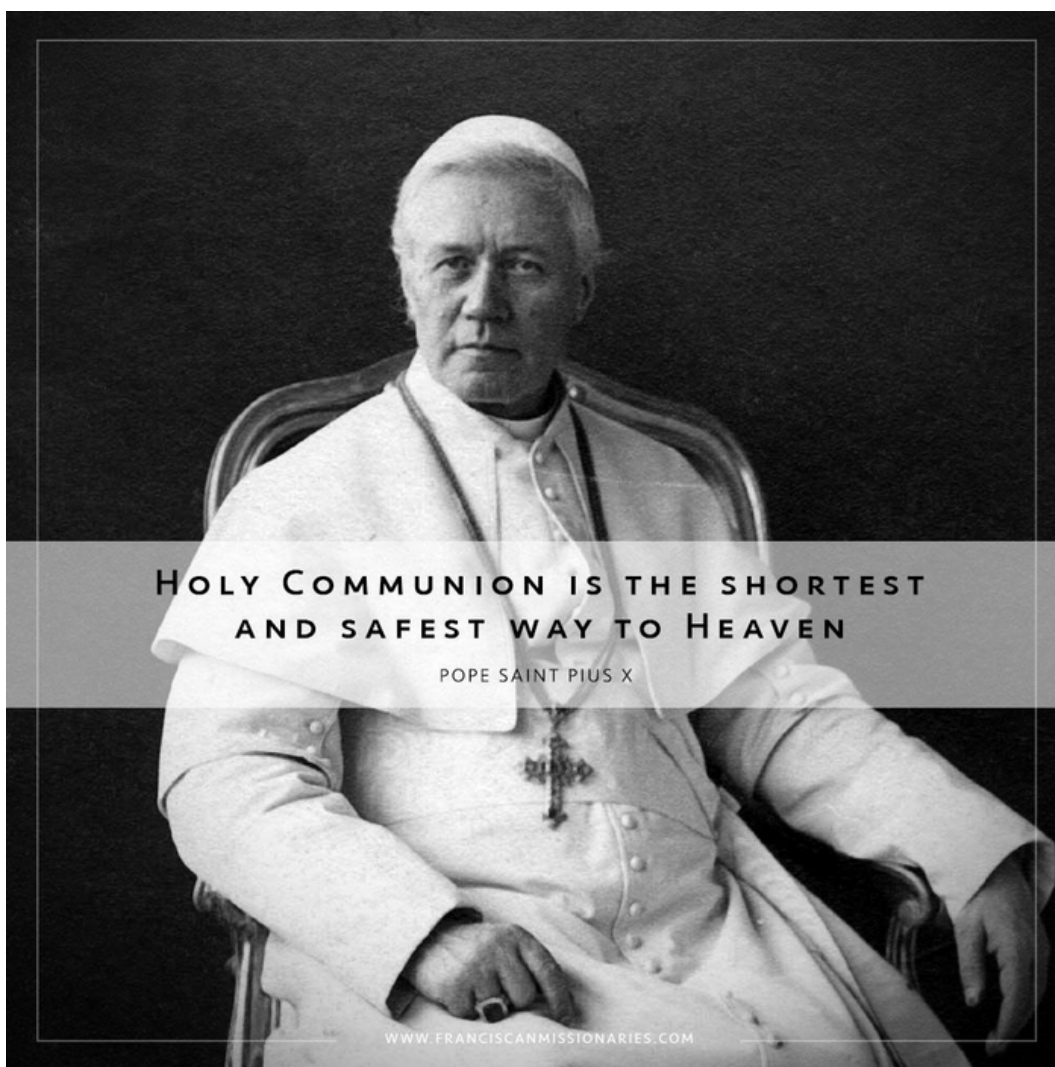
HEAVEN IN OUR HANDS

In the Bread of Life Discourse, Jesus promises eternal life to those who consume His body and blood. This promise isn't for a future time, but something we can enjoy right now!

Pope St. John Paul II spoke of this promise of the Lord:

"Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life: they already possess it on earth, as the first-fruits of a future fullness which will embrace man in his totality. For in the Eucharist we also receive the pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of the world... This pledge of the future resurrection comes from the fact that the flesh of the Son of Man, given as food, is his body in its glorious state after the resurrection. With the Eucharist we digest, as it were, the 'secret' of the resurrection." (Ecclesia de Eucharistia, para. 18).

Think about this when you receive the Eucharist next Sunday at Mass.



REFLECT

In what ways do you need Jesus to feed you? What good things are you hungry for?

Which of Jesus' teachings do you find most difficult to live?

If you had to spend the rest of your life on a deserted island and you could only take 5 people with you, whom would you take?

DISCUSS

What is your favorite thing about being Catholic?

When did you first learn about Jesus being present in the Eucharist?

CHALLENGE

PRAY:

Next time you receive the Eucharist ask Jesus to feed you in the way you need.

If you have a hard time believing in the real presence, pray "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief."

DO:

Tell someone about the Eucharistic miracle(s) you've learned about.

MAKE:

Try making your own communion wafers following a recipe that fulfills the requirements of the Church for eucharistic bread.





SESSION FIFTEEN

CHRIST IN US:
YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT



My Lord and my God,
I firmly believe that you are present in the Eucharist.
Take the blindness from my eyes,
so that I can see all people and things as you see them.
Take the deafness from my ears,
so that I can hear your truth and follow it.
Take the hardness from my heart,
so that I can live and love generously.
Give me the grace to receive the Eucharist with humility,
so that you can transform me a little more each day
into the person you created me to be.

AMEN.

- Matthew Kelly

THE POWER OF THE EUCHARIST

There is a lot of talk these days about superfoods.

Superfoods are high in nutrients and rich in antioxidants, and they keep your immune system strong to fight off disease. Superfoods include salmon, kale, apples, etc.

The Eucharist is the ultimate superfood for the soul, loaded with grace to keep you spiritually healthy, give you the wisdom and strength to choose the right path, and fight off diseases like selfishness and other vices and bad habits.

Sacraments are a continuation of the transformative grace that flowed out from the side of Jesus on the cross (CCC 1116). Grace is the assistance God gives us to do what is good, true, noble, and right. And there is no better way to receive God's grace than through the Eucharist.

The presence of that divine love in Christ had a powerful impact on people's lives 2,000 years ago. It overcame illness, drove away darkness, brought healing, shared forgiveness in the face of sin. Did you know we can encounter that same powerful presence of Jesus in the Eucharist?

When you go to Mass next Sunday, keep in mind that the Eucharist is not just a symbol. This is Jesus. We've all got problems. We all have struggles. But whatever you've got, he can handle. You need grace.

Isn't it time you allowed God to unleash the power of grace in your life?



**"FROM THE EUCHARIST COMES STRENGTH
TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND ZEAL
TO SHARE THAT LIFE WITH OTHERS."
- ST JOHN PAUL II**



THE EFFECT OF OUR
SHARING IN THE
BODY & BLOOD
of Christ IS TO CHANGE
US INTO WHAT WE RECEIVE.
-POPE SAINT LEO THE GREAT

LOVE NEAR US

Love wants to be near the one it loves. And the God who is Love longs to be close to us. That's why He remains dwelling among us here on earth in the Eucharist. St. Francis de Sales wrote, "In the Eucharist we become one with God."

To be one with God is a beautiful thing, and it is the deepest desire of all humans. St. Augustine wrote, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you." The only One who can truly satisfy the human heart is God, the One who made it. We all have a desire for something more, a relationship with God who alone can make sense of everything and bring permanent, complete happiness.

The Eucharist is the "source and summit of Christian life," the heart of our faith and the place where we find who we truly are—because it is Jesus Himself. Since Jesus gives us his body to eat in the Eucharist and "you are what you eat," we too become temples of God and the Holy Spirit dwells within us.

And we can encounter Him not only when we receive Him in Holy Communion at Mass, but also when we draw near to Him in all the tabernacles and Him in the monstrance during Adoration.





WHAT IS ADORATION?

Eucharistic Adorations is when we spend time in prayer with Jesus in the form of the Blessed Sacrament in Exposition.

WHAT IS THE BLESSED SACRAMENT?

Once a host has been consecrated at Mass, we call it the Blessed Sacrament or the Eucharist because it is no longer bread but is Jesus' Body.

WHAT IS A MONSTRANCE?

A monstrance is an open or transparent receptacle in which the consecrated host is exposed for veneration.

WHAT IS A HOLY HOUR?

A Holy Hour is when we spend a set amount of time (like an hour) in Eucharistic Adoration when a priest has exposed the Blessed Sacrament and we pray together with other people.

A Holy Hour will often begin with Exposition and end with Benediction.

WHAT IS EXPOSITION?

Exposition is when a priest starts a Holy Hour by taking the host out of the Tabernacle and placing it in the Monstrance. We usually sing the song *O Saving Victim* during Exposition.

WHAT IS BENEDICTION?

Benediction is when we close a Holy Hour with special prayers.

The word benediction means 'blessing', and we are blessed with the Eucharist by the priest.

We usually sing the song *Down in Adoration Falling* during Benediction.

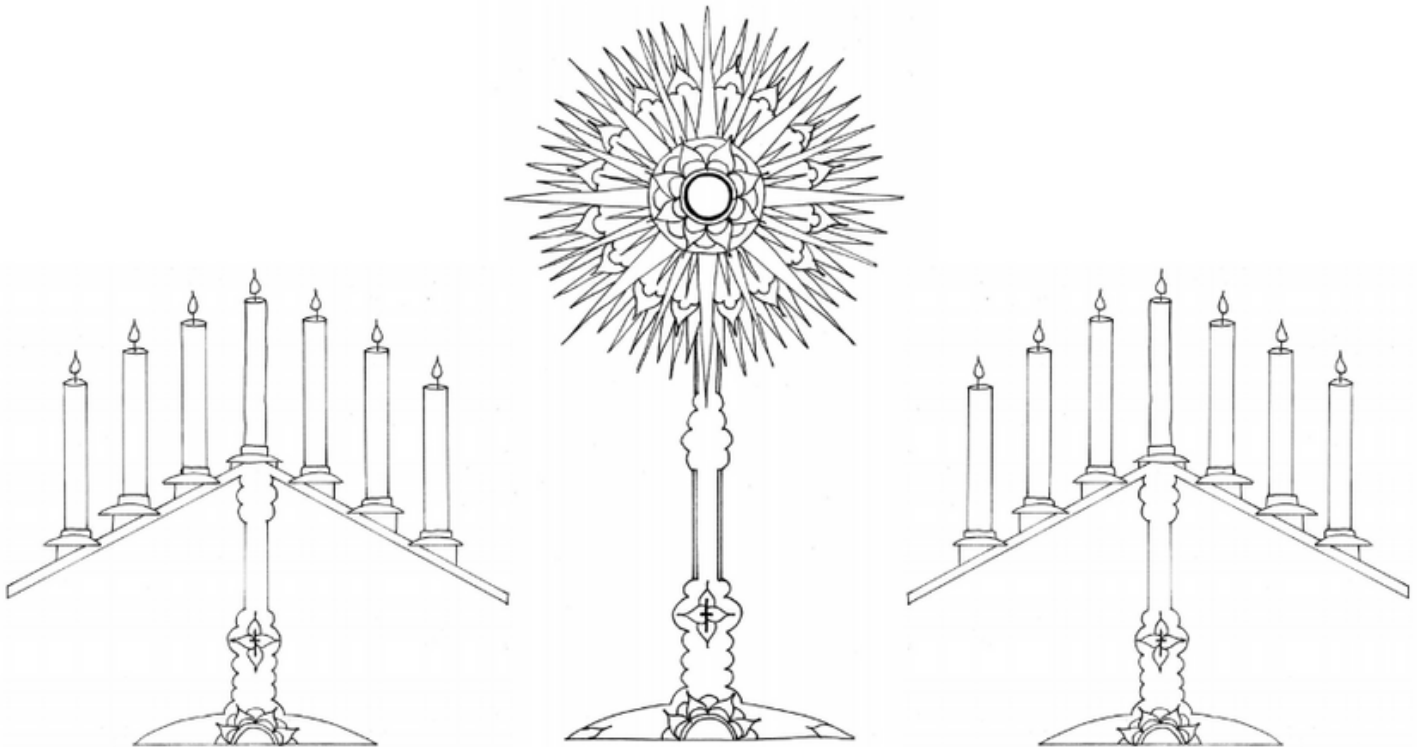


**WHAT DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU LOOK AT JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT?
DO YOU SEE BREAD OR DO YOU SEE HIS REAL PRESENCE?**

**DO YOU ALLOW HIM TO SEE YOU?
IS HE YOUR BEST FRIEND?
DO YOU SHARE WITH HIM THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY PARTS OF YOU?**

“The greatest love story of all time
is contained in a tiny white host.”

~ Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen



THE BRAVEST LITTLE GIRL

The Chinese government has never been fond of Christians.

During the Boxer Rebellion, they sent soldiers to destroy Catholic Churches.

A little girl was praying in the back of one of these Churches when the soldiers came.

They desecrated the church and arrested the priest.

Finally, they broke into the tabernacle and threw the Eucharist all over the floor. There were 32 hosts.

The priest was placed under house arrest in the rectory.

That night, he watched the girl slip past the soldier outside the rectory and sneak into the Church.

She knelt before one of the hosts on the floor, and made a holy hour.

Then she bent down and consumed the Eucharist by licking Him off the floor.

She did this every night for 32 nights.

On the 32nd night, after she had consumed the final host, she accidentally made a small noise.

It was enough to wake up the rectory guard.

The priest watched from his bedroom-now-prison as the guard martyred the little girl by beating her to death with the butt of his rifle.

We don't know her name.

We don't know anything about her, other than that we should all pray to be more like her.

Her story is so beautiful that it spread from person to person, then town to town, and eventually made its way to a young priest named Fr. Fulton Sheen.

He was so inspired by it that he committed himself to making a daily Holy Hour.

He later became a bishop and a very popular radio and television preacher.

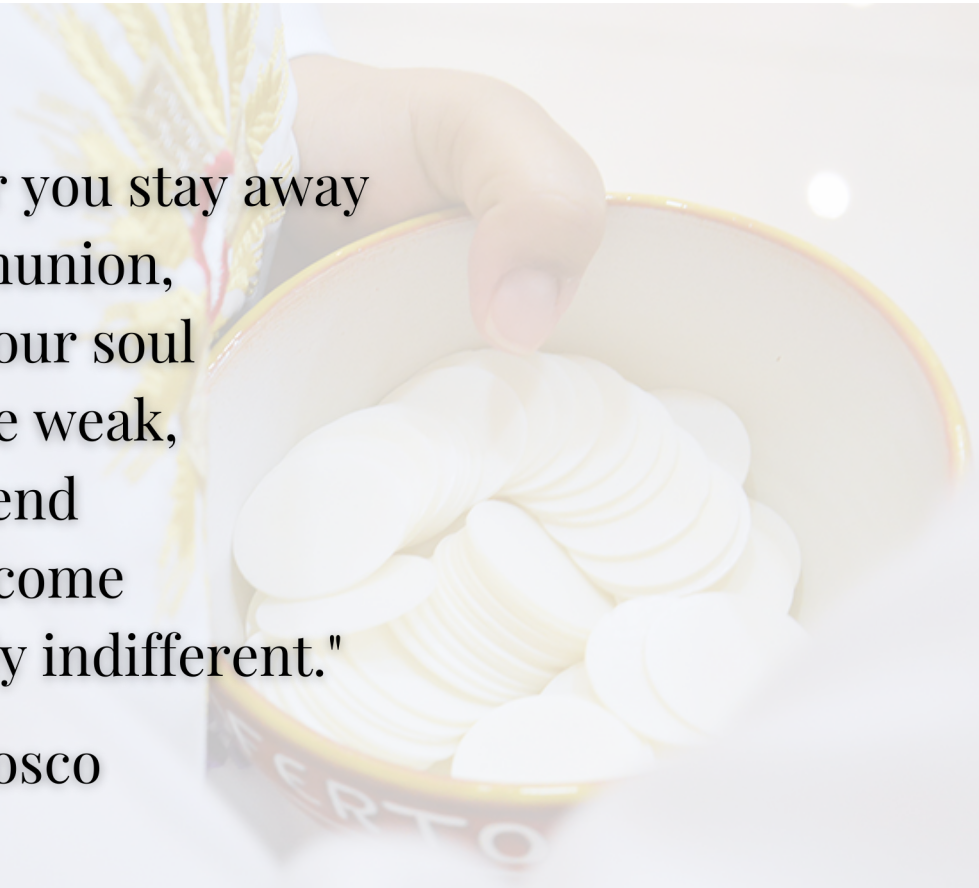
Now his cause is up for sainthood.

Despite his enormous success, he told an interviewer shortly before his death that this little girl inspired his work more than any pope or canonized saint.

She ignited a love for the Eucharist in him that fed his whole ministry.

SAINTS ON THE EUCHARIST

**DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH AND TAKE NOTES
ON HOW SOME OF THE SAINTS VIEWED EXPERIENCED THE EUCHARIST.
DO ANY OF THEM OFFER YOU A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE EUCHARIST?**

A hand is shown holding a white ceramic bowl filled with white, round communion wafers. The bowl has a yellow rim and the word "CERTO" is partially visible on its side. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

"The longer you stay away
from communion,
the more your soul
will become weak,
and in the end
you will become
dangerously indifferent."

- St John Bosco

WATCH: Fr. Mike Schmitz

"Why We Have to Attend Mass and Receive Communion in a State of Grace"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pw7Hl4RxFl>

WHY WE HAVE TO ATTEND MASS

Why is skipping Mass on Sunday a mortal sin?

Remember that at the heart of sin (especially the Original Sin of Adam & Eve) is the declaration "God I know what you want me to do. I don't care. I want to do what I want to do."

The 2 ways we can love God is through obedience to His commandments and worship Him. Sunday Mass actually combines both of those because He commanded us to "do this in memory of me" and to worship Him in a very particular way.

It's tempting to believe we can love God in whatever way suits us, but that's not how love works. Fr. Mike explains that going to Mass on Sunday is our weekly chance to prove our love for God.

RECEIVING IN A STATE OF GRACE

Why do you have to go to confession before receiving communion if you are in a state of sin?

Jesus Himself taught that if you are on your way to offer your gift on the altar you must first be reconciled with your brother or sister (Mt 5:23-24)

St. Paul expands this and applies it to the Eucharist saying that those who receive the Eucharist unworthily are guilty of the blood of Christ, that they are guilty of his murder (1 Cor 11:27)


Why? Because it's all about relationship.

If we hurt one of our friends and broke their trust, we would have to reconcile with them before we can be close and intimate friends again.

Similarly, communion with God is only possible once we have been reconciled with God and His Church.

Receiving Jesus is so serious that at Mass we echo the words of the centurion soldier:

"Lord, I am not worthy to receive you but only say the word and my soul shall be sealed."



LORD,
I am not worthy
that you should ENTER UNDER MY
ROOF, BUT ONLY SAY
the word
and my soul
SHALL BE HEALED.

REFLECT

How do you think your life would change if you spent one hour each week sitting quietly in Jesus' presence in the Blessed Sacrament?

How many hours of her life do you think Mary spent in adoration of Jesus?

Do you approach Holy Communion with the same reverence and devotion that the Chinese girl had?

She went to such great lengths, even risking her own life, to draw near to Christ's presence in the Eucharist. What sacrifices are you willing to make to draw near to Him?

DISCUSS

How do you feel when you receive the Eucharist?

Did you miss the Eucharist when you are unable to receive it?

CHALLENGE

PRAY:

Spend time with Jesus in-person or via live stream in Eucharistic Adoration.

DO:

Listen and sing along to Matt Maher's song "Adoration."

