

## Living the Sacrifice of the Eucharist in Every Moment

To speak of “living” the Eucharist is to consider:

- The Eucharist as foundational to our lives as followers of Jesus Christ – for how could we “live” something unless it was at the very heart of “who we are.”
- The Eucharistic “worship” contains far more than the “external worship” that we perceive, transcending the limits of our perception, knowledge, and experience – or as though it is strictly meant to be determined by you or me as to “how” we worship.
- For the Eucharist contains “life” itself – life that is God’s to give. According, for us to live that life *that is the Eucharist* means receiving and having a gift of life within us that otherwise would not be were it not for the Eucharist.

**Vatican II - Sacrosanctum concilium 10:** [Mindful that the worship of the Church is not the entirety of her life and activity], “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper.”

### What essentially is the Eucharist?

- It is “the re-presentation” of the one-time sacrifice of Christ, the one true High Priest of the new covenant, offered to the Father on behalf of sinful humanity, by which there is atonement for sin and the gift of new life in Christ.
- It is the consummation of the new and eternal covenant in the Blood of Christ – the completion of the priestly work of Christ through the shedding of his own blood.
- It is the source and manifestation of communion of believers in the mystery of the Holy Trinity (this is more properly an effect of the Eucharist.)
- It is worship of God, through the participation of the baptized as members of the Body of Christ, in the one offering of Christ. In this worship, God’s generous love is offering to and for us, in the presence of which our humble surrender of self in adoration of God’s saving work is both proper and necessary.

Given these essential definitions of what the Eucharist is, we can break them out by even more fundamental elements:

- The Eucharist is principally a sacrifice – Jesus’ own offering of his own life: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. It is an offering made to the Father on our behalf.
- At the same time it is a source of nourishment, provided for us by Christ in his self-offering.
- Accordingly, both as a sacrifice on our behalf and at true meal, it is the work of Christ – it is primarily His to offer to us as a *gift* (not a work “we do” for God.)
- Minding that our call as baptized Catholics is to “fully, consciously, and actively participate in the sacred worship, this “participation” is above all a call to humility and surrendering of self to the saving work of Christ – that he himself may bestow upon us his own Divine life, drawing us into Holy Communion. It is only within the interior disposition of surrender to Jesus Christ that our “outward actions,” (whether in the worship itself, or in the world in the midst of which we live) truly become what they are meant to be.
- Far more than just worship and God’s help for our present state, the Eucharist is a “foretaste” of that eternal life and communion that are the Kingdom of God – thus pointing us toward our eternal calling while still

remaining on pilgrimage in this life. Our right partaking in the Holy Mass and Eucharistic communion draws us into “Communion” with God and all his holy ones – giving as it is both a foretaste of that eternal love and communion of God and all his saints in heaven along with a present share in such a relationship of communion for our lives in the present moment.

And so: We have a mystery that connects us at every Holy Mass (in the present moment) to the singular moment in time of Christ’s saving act (at Calvary) and the eternal reality of heaven at the end of time. These points and their drawing together the whole of Salvation History (past, present, and future) show us a “way of life” that we are called to live at all times.

When it comes to applying the fundamental characteristics of what the worship of God in the Eucharist is with the lives we lead from day to day, St. John Paul, in his encyclical “On the Eucharist,” *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, (#60) says this as a possible summary: “Every commitment to holiness, every activity aimed at carrying out the Church’s mission, every work of pastoral planning, must draw the strength it needs from the Eucharistic mystery and in turn be directed to that mystery as its culmination. In the Eucharist we have Jesus, we have his

redemptive sacrifice, we have his resurrection, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have adoration, obedience and love of the Father.”

This fundamental nature of the Eucharist being as it is, might we propose a “map” to living the Eucharist, relying on a few parts of the the post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI “on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s life and Mission,” *Sacramentum caritatis*, given to us in 2007 (after the Ordinary Synod on the Eucharist which took place in autumn 2006.)

In Part III of this document, (entitled “The Eucharist, A Mystery to be Lived,”) Pope Benedict alludes to several levels of “living the Eucharistic sacrifice.” In so doing, he further unfolds the meaning of the reality of “active participation” in a broader and more fundamental understanding than the common use of these words normally connote.

- The first area of reflection he treats is the truth that we are to learn to make a total offering of ourselves in worship, following the words of Romans 12:1 that exhort “I appeal to you, therefore, my brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

- Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy contains this very idea in paragraph 48 that says: "The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all." These very words give a more encompassing understanding of what it means to participate in the works of Christ, truly cooperating above all with what he is accomplishing on our behalf, responding to the gift that we have received.
- Our worship is not just a matter of our souls – or what is in mind in heart – but it involves our entire being.

- This “offering of self” is a surrendering ourselves to God, who made us and redeemed us – that his gift of himself in the Eucharist may transform us into becoming like him.
- While this offering of self is rooted in and sustained by the worship of God in Holy Mass, it then extends to every aspect of life – as is especially characterized by the words of dismissal from Mass, as we are literal “sent” to announce the Gospel, glorifying the Lord by our lives, bring the gift of peace into the world.
  - Worship becomes lived by our remaining rooted in what Jesus Christ has accomplished for us and in us.
  - Worshiping of Jesus becomes “who we are” – our lives become sacrifice and thanksgiving.
- Finally, we live this mystery by our engaging in the missionary activity of the Church – living what Christ has accomplished for us and in us in our relationships with others.

As for all of you here today – having presented to you what may seem to be overwhelming details, might I simplify it this way:

- Our lives themselves are a gift. God wills for us to be and as those creatures made in his image and likeness, our “being” is meant for love.
- Though our first parents fell from grace, God did not abandon us, but wills to redeem us through the greatest act of love that could ever be imagined: through taking on the life and nature of sinners so as die, offering himself (in his divinity and the fullness of human nature) as an offering to atone for the sins of all of humanity.
- This “offering” is made to He who is the source of life itself (God the Father) by one who is fully able to make such an offering (one who is without sin and of the human nature.)
- This one offering, which is offered in time, transcends all times, with its desired effect available for all in all times and places down to the end – in particular through the sacramental expressing of this one offering that Jesus Christ himself established as he carried out and accomplished this saving work.
- You and I, having received baptism in this mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection, are called to “live” after the manner of Christ himself.
- Our sharing in the Eucharistic then is fundamental an act of worship where we too are to offer ourselves to God the Father, through the one offering of



Jesus, learning to be united to it by first humbly surrendering ourselves to him and to the gift of salvation that only he can accomplish in us.

- Receiving this gift, (as we any gift), we seek to give thanks – by our humble worship and by the way we live.
- The more properly and perfectly we enter into this humble act of worship – the more we are transformed by it into those whom Christ has made us to be – able to live this mystery at every moment and in every act, not only in formal moments of prayer and worship.
- It is this “learning to offer ourselves” that leads to living the Eucharist – allowing Jesus Christ himself to accomplish his work (which is his to accomplish), being transformed into it, and putting it into practice. Such is to live the mystery of the Eucharist.