

Eucharistic Series - Part 3

“Communion & Community”

- Prepare beforehand: have participants bring a Bible and journal, or have a copy of this document for each person. Snacks help build community, too!

- Opening Prayer (together):

O boundless charity! Just as you gave us yourself, wholly God and wholly human, so you left us all of yourself as food so that while we are pilgrims in this life, we might not collapse in our weariness but be strengthened by you, heavenly food.* Jesus, please guide our conversation today, drawing us closer to you and to one another. Amen.
(*The Prayers of St. Catherine of Siena)

- Warm Up Questions (feel free to substitute your own): High and low points of the last week? What thoughts have been resonating with you about last week’s meditation? Was anyone able to make it to adoration for last week’s challenge, and what did you experience?

- Video (4 minutes): Sheila Verhagen shares a story about going to mass with small children.

- After watching the video: What are your thoughts about Sheila’s story? Has anyone ever had a season when it felt like going to mass each week is or was challenging? What strengthens you?

- Group Reflection (30-40 minutes) The excerpt below is a section from the document *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*, written in 2021 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. This section is called “Communion with Christ and the Church.” Have a group member read each section slowly. I suggest discussing each section separately. Underline any words or phrases that stand out to you, or that you don’t understand.

24. When we receive Holy Communion, Christ is giving himself to us. He comes to us in all humility, as he came to us in the Incarnation, so that we may receive him and become one with him. Christ gives himself to us so that we may continue the pilgrim path toward life with him in the fullness of the Kingdom of God. The fourteenth-century Orthodox theologian Nicholas Cabasilas described this sacrament by saying, “unlike any other sacrament, the mystery [of the Eucharist] is so perfect that it brings us to the heights of every good thing: here is the ultimate goal of every human desire, because here we attain God and God joins himself to us in the most perfect union.” Through this sacrament, the pilgrim Church is nourished, deepening her communion with the Triune God and consequently that of her members with one another.

25. The Sacrament of the Eucharist is called Holy Communion precisely because, by placing us in intimate communion with the sacrifice of Christ, we are placed in intimate communion with him and, through him, with each other. Therefore, the Eucharist is called Holy Communion because it is “the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being.”³³ How can we understand this? The Gospel of John recounts that, when Jesus died on the cross, blood and water flowed out (Jn 19:34), symbolic of Baptism and the Eucharist. The Second Vatican Council teaches, “The origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of the crucified Jesus,” and that “it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church.” In this image from the Gospel of John, we see that the Church, the Bride of the Lamb, is born from the sacrificial love of Christ in his self-offering on the cross. The Eucharist re-presents this one sacrifice so that we are placed in communion with it and with the divine love from which it flows forth. We are placed in communion with each other through this love which is given to us. That is why we can say, “the Eucharist makes the Church.”

26. We are first incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church, through the waters of Baptism. Yet Baptism, like the other sacraments, is ordered toward Eucharistic communion. The Second Vatican Council teaches,

The other sacraments, as well as with every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are tied together with the Eucharist and are directed toward it. The Most Blessed Eucharist contains the entire spiritual boon of the Church, that is, Christ himself, our Pasch and Living Bread, by the action of the Holy Spirit through his very flesh vital and vitalizing, giving life to men who are thus invited and encouraged to offer themselves, their labors and all created things, together with him.

The Council Fathers continue,

In this light, the Eucharist shows itself as the source and the apex of the whole work of preaching the Gospel. Those under instruction are introduced by stages to a sharing in the Eucharist, and the faithful, already marked with the seal of Baptism and Confirmation, are through the reception of the Eucharist fully joined to the Body of Christ.

That is why the Council calls the eucharistic sacrifice “the source and summit of the Christian life.”

27. St. Paul emphasizes that this communion exists not only among ourselves but also with those who came before us. In addressing the Church at Corinth, he praises them for holding fast to the traditions, just as I handed them on to you (1 Cor 11:2). Later, he highlights the Eucharist as a sacred tradition handed on by Christ to the Apostles, and in which we now share: For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you (1 Cor 11:23). During every Mass we are united with all the holy men and women, the saints, who have preceded us.

28. The obligation to attend Mass each Sunday, the Lord’s Day, on which we commemorate the Resurrection of Jesus, and on other holy days of obligation, is therefore a vital expression of our unity as members of the Body of Christ, the Church. It is also a manifestation of the truth that we

are utterly dependent upon God and his grace. A third-century instruction on the life of the Church points out one of the consequences of willful absence from Mass: "Let no one deprive the Church by staying away; if they do, they deprive the Body of Christ of one of its members!" St. John Paul II, writing of Sunday as "a day which is at the very heart of the Christian life," further asserts, "Time given to Christ is never time lost, but is rather time gained, so that our relationships and indeed our whole life may become more profoundly human." We have been reborn in Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist so that we may live in communion with God and one another, not only today but also in the fullness of the heavenly Kingdom. To worship God on Sundays, then, is not the mere observance of a rule but the fulfillment of our identity, of who we are as members of the Body of Christ. Participation in the Mass is an act of love.

- Go back through each section as a group. Use phones to look up any definitions or scriptures that need clarification for group members. **In each section**, what message stands out to you?
- What part of this message surprises you, challenges you, or inspires you?
- What words could you use to share this message with someone you care about who has stopped attending mass?
- Challenge for the week: ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind someone who He wants you to invite to mass. Pray for courage, and extend the invitation. Do not allow yourself to feel defeated if they say no, because the invitation is a victory! Just keep praying and remember how patient Jesus is with all of us as we grow.
- The closest adoration chapel is Mary Morningstar Chapel: 4905 Schofield St., Monona, WI 53716. Hours are 6am - 8pm. <https://marymorningstarchapelwi.com/>
- Closing Prayer: Go around the circle, each person mentioning a prayer request for yourself and please also pray for all people, for a renewed fervor to love Jesus in the Eucharist. When you are finished, pray an Our Father for those intentions. God bless you, everyone! See you next week. :)
- Recommended for further learning:
 - [Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist, Brant Pitre](#) (book)
 - [The Fourth Cup, Scott Hahn](#) (book)
 - [Eucharistic Revival Website](#) (website from USCCB)
 - [The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church](#), US Conference of Catholic Bishops (PDF document)