

# Doctrine Overview: Eucharist

“Jesus said to them, ‘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’” (John 6:53). In embracing this clear teaching of Christ, the Church has declared the most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist to be the “source and summit of the Christian life” to which all other Sacraments are bound and oriented (CCC 1324 and *Lumen Gentium* 11).

## Origin, Purpose, and Effects

Jesus established the Eucharist at the Last Supper when he said, “This is my body... this is my blood.” (Matthew 26:26-28). From the beginning, the Church has always professed the Blessed Sacrament to be the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. The Council of Trent expressed the miracle of the Eucharist as transubstantiation—the complete change of the substance of the bread and the wine into the substance of the Body and Blood of Jesus (CCC 1376).

The Eucharist has profound effects in the lives of the faithful. It puts us in intimate union with Jesus, renews and strengthens the grace of Baptism, strengthens charity and wipes away venial sins while also preserving from future sin, unites us to one another in the Mystical Body of Christ in his Church on earth, and so much more (CCC 1331, 1391-1396). This feast and sacrifice of God’s love is rich beyond all telling.

## Receiving Holy Communion

St. Paul reminds us of the importance of being

properly disposed to receive the Eucharist: “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:27). It is important that a person go to the Sacrament of Penance first if he or she is aware of unconfessed mortal sin. One should also observe the required fast prior to receiving (one hour in the Latin Church) (CCC 1385, 1387).

Though it is always offered in the Eucharist, grace can only be received according to the mode of the receiver. We must be open to the Lord and all that

he wants to give us, or the grace he is offering in the Blessed Sacrament will not produce its intended effects as powerfully within us.

The Eucharist is received under two “species”—the form of bread and the form of wine. While receiving the Eucharist under both species is a fuller symbol of what we are actually receiving, we should recognize that to receive even the tiniest fragment of the consecrated host or the smallest particles of the consecrated wine is to receive the fullness of the Body and Blood of Jesus. For this reason, receiving under one species is acceptable since Christ is equally present in both (CCC 1390).

Jesus says to his Apostles (and to us), “I have eagerly desired to eat

this Passover with you” (Luke 22:15). Overwhelmed with the love, sacrifice, and feasting our Lord so lavishly showers upon us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, let us always eagerly yearn to enter into most intimate communion with him in the Bread of Life.

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