

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ • Year C • June 22, 2025



*Lord Jesus,
as truth itself, you
promised that when we
celebrate this holy meal,
the Eucharist,
we eat and drink
your Real Presence.
May that truth
form us for action.*

Sunday Word

Genesis 14:18-20

Psalms 110:1-4

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Luke 9:11b-17

Foreshadowing the Eucharist

Melchizedek presents bread and wine to bless Abram. He praises God for victory over the enemy and for the gift of life bestowed on God's people. In return, Abram offers a tenth of everything to Melchizedek. He gives in response to what he himself has received.

Proclaiming the Paschal Mystery

Saint Paul reminds us that when we celebrate the Eucharist, we proclaim the saving Passion, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We eat and drink what we proclaim, and we live that proclamation.

Pointing to the Living Bread

Jesus performs another sign, a miraculous feeding of over five thousand with only five loaves and two fish. From our scarcity, the Lord provides abundance. This sign points to the saving reality that we eat and drink in the Eucharist: Jesus himself is the living bread come down from Heaven, the manna given for our Salvation.

Catholic Teaching: The Real Presence

On the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, the Church contemplates the Eucharistic banquet. Eating and drinking the sacred bread and wine, the Church proclaims the Death of the Lord until he comes in glory. In obedience to Jesus, the Church carries out his command to do this in his memory. This liturgical memorial focuses on the sacrifice of the Lord, which in the Eucharist is offered again to the Father through the gifts of bread and wine by the power of the Holy Spirit and the very words of Christ himself.

During the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, we hear those words again, spoken by the presiding priest or bishop. By this consecration, the bread and wine undergo transubstantiation into the Body and Blood of Christ. This means that when believers eat the bread

and drink from the cup, although they outwardly taste the fruits of the earth and our human hands, they inwardly experience in faith the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself on our behalf.

The presence of Christ in the Eucharist continues for as long as the Eucharistic species (the bread and wine) subsist. That Real Presence exists wholly and totally in each, such that whether an individual consumes only the Eucharistic bread or only the Eucharistic wine, *both* the Body and Blood are received.

What is the significance of the Real Presence? The Eucharist is not simply symbolic. It does not merely point to God. It is not a projection on our part. In this sacred meal, we receive and partake of the divine presence and are joined to Christ's own self-sacrifice to the Father.

The "Amen" that the assembly proffers at the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer acts as a prelude to receiving Holy Communion. It is, in effect, saying to the Lord: Here we are, we come to do your will in the world. Fed on the Real Presence, the Body and Blood of Christ, the faithful are united to the Lord, transformed and strengthened by him for service in the world.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

The Eucharist represents the source and summit of the entire Christian life. In it, the sanctifying action of God reaches its high point.

Holy Communion provides the grace necessary for us to be on mission with Christ in the world precisely because it opens for us our communion with the divine life of the Holy Trinity and union with the entire People of God. Both are expressed and effected by this sacrament so that believers can witness to and become Good News for others.



Key Terms

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

The unique change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of wine into the substance of his Blood, even though the outward characteristics, or species, of bread and wine remain (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1376).

REAL PRESENCE

Unique and true presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist under the species, or appearances, of bread and wine. Believers deepen their faith in the Real Presence of Christ through adoration and communion at the Eucharistic liturgy, in visits to the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle, and at the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1381).

EXPOSITION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Ritual action by which the Eucharist is taken from its place of reservation in the tabernacle and exposed either in a sacred vessel that contains it (a ciborium) or one that displays it (a monstrance) for the adoration and worship of the faithful (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1378).

Voices of Faith

This wholly redeemed city, the assembly and society of the saints, is offered to God as a universal sacrifice by the high priest who in the form of a slave went so far as to offer himself for us. . . . The Church continues to reproduce this sacrifice in the sacrament of the altar so well known to believers wherein it is evident to them that in what she offers she herself is offered.

—Saint Augustine

The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith. . . . Let our adoration never cease.

—Pope Saint John Paul II

Further Reading

***Catechism of the Catholic Church*:** 1373 (Christ present to his Church), 1375 (affirmation of the Real Presence by early Fathers), 1378 (worship of the Eucharist within and outside Mass), 1379 (purpose of the tabernacle)

***United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*:** Chapter 17 (The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Christian Life), especially the sections entitled "The Real Presence of Christ," "Ways of Participating in the Paschal Mystery," and "The Eucharist Transforms the Recipient," pages 223–227

***Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church*:** 273 (institution of the Eucharist by Christ), 281 (ways the Church participates in the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ).