



The Eucharistic Liturgy



Formed, Transformed, and Sent

The Eucharist is the “sign” and “cause” of our communion with God and our unity as the People of God. In the Eucharist, we “unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy” and with one another. Together transformed, we are then sent forth to fulfill God’s will in our daily lives (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], nos. 1325-26, 1332). In this way, the Eucharistic Liturgy is social in nature. It is the celebration through which God draws us into communion with himself and with others, forming and transforming us to live as the Body of Christ in the world.

Gathering

The gathering for worship and the Introductory Rites emphasize our coming together as a community. From our individual lives and situations, we gather as one family. At the entrance song, we raise our voices in a united chorus. The ordained minister leads us in the Sign of the Cross, which recalls the Trinity’s divine communion of persons and to which we respond with one communal voice. As we make the Sign of the Cross, we turn to God, opening ourselves to his transforming presence.

Penitential Act

During the Penitential Act, we acknowledge the sin that affects our relationship with God, ourselves, others, and the world around us. We seek Christ’s healing love and forgiveness in order that we might be transformed—both as individuals and as a community, into a people of love. During the *Confiteor*, we ask the members of our heavenly community, “blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints,” and our brothers and sisters around us to pray for us, and we for them.

Liturgy of the Word

At this time, we hear a “proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation” (Pope Paul VI, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy], no. 35). Through the Scriptures, we also receive teaching, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Tm 3:16). We are guided and instructed in faith and in how to live in right relationship with God, others, ourselves, and creation.

Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful

As Pope John Paul II writes, “The Prayer of the Faithful responds not only to the needs of the particular Christian community but also to those of all humanity,” and the Church “makes her own ‘the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of people today, especially of the poor and all those who suffer’” (*Dies Domini* [On Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy], no. 38).

Preparation of the Gifts

Bringing forth donations to share with the poor along with the bread and the wine was part of the tradition of even the first Christian communities. The writings of SS. Paul, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Justin Martyr, and Cyprian describe these donations for use to help orphans and widows, the sick, the imprisoned, and sojourning strangers. Pope John Paul II reminds us that we bring more than our money or donations, bread, and wine to the altar; we also bring our hearts. Through the presentation of the gifts, we contribute to “a demanding *culture of sharing*, to be lived not only among the members of the community itself but also in society as a whole” (*Dies Domini*, no. 70).

The Eucharistic Prayer

During the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest prays that we might share in the fellowship of the apostles, saints, and martyrs—recalling real and inspiring examples of the “very many saints who are living examples for us of Eucharistic worship” (Pope John Paul II, *Dominicae Cenae* [On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist], no. 5). As the

Eucharistic Prayer continues, the reality of Christ's sacrifice is proclaimed for us in order to make us "a holy people" and to allow us to "enjoy for ever the fullness of [God's] glory." The fourth prayer reminds us of the Father's desire "that we might live no longer for ourselves" and that his Spirit would bring "to perfection his work in the world."

During the *consecration*, the Holy Spirit transforms the gifts on the altar into the Body and Blood of Jesus. Christ's sacrifice does not remain at the altar but also enters into our hearts as we participate in it, that we might come to know and model the love that is present in the sacrifice. This *memorial* (which he said to do "in memory of me") recalls Christ's words at the Last Supper. His sacrificial act strengthens our faith and also draws us to "enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* [God Is Love], no. 13).

The Communion Rite

During the Lord's Prayer, we praise the Father, pray for the coming of his Kingdom on earth, and recall again our need for reconciliation to God and others. At the Rite of Peace, we extend our hands and our hearts to one another in a sign of communion and charity. We then ask the Lamb of God for mercy and peace.

Before the priest raises the host, he proclaims how Christ, through "the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit" brought "life to the world." On behalf of the congregation, he prays, "Keep me always faithful to your commandments, and never let me be parted from you." In praying to be faithful to the Church's teachings, God's help is sought in our daily lives to follow the mandates of Scripture and the

tradition of our Church, which lead us to right and loving relationship with God, ourselves, and others.

Before receiving Communion, we acknowledge our unworthiness and pray for God's healing for ourselves and our community. We prepare for communion with Christ and the Spirit, but also with one another. Pope John Paul II writes in *Dominicae Cena*, "We approach as a community the table." We receive Christ as "a gift and grace for each individual" but also "in the unity of His body which is the Church" (no. 4). The Eucharist is a "sacrament of [the Church's] unity" (no. 12).

Final Blessing and Dismissal

The Concluding Rites with the Dismissal prepare us for mission: empowered by the Holy Spirit, we live out our baptismal consecration in the world. Renewed by the Eucharist, we are sent back into our daily lives to transform our communities and world.

Pope John Paul II writes that the Prayer after Communion, Final Blessing, and Dismissal should lead "all who have shared in the Eucharist" to "a deeper sense of the responsibility which is entrusted to them." Returning to their daily lives, Christ's disciples are called to "make their whole life a gift, a spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God (cf. Rom 12:1). They feel indebted to their brothers and sisters because of what they have received in the celebration" (*Dies Domini*, no. 45).

The Good News we have received should overflow into our lives and move us to mission in the world. Thus, the Concluding Rites are not an end but a beginning, calling us to make our entire lives "Eucharistic," so that "the Christian who takes part in the Eucharist learns

to become a *promoter of communion, peace and solidarity* in every situation" (Pope John Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine* [Stay with Us, Lord], no. 27). Pope John Paul II issues this challenge:

Why not make the Lord's Day a more intense time of sharing, encouraging all the inventiveness of which Christian charity is capable? Inviting to a meal people who are alone, visiting the sick, providing food for needy families, spending a few hours in voluntary work and acts of solidarity: these would certainly be ways of bringing into people's lives the love of Christ received at the Eucharistic table. (*Dies Domini*, no. 72)

Likewise, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that our "fraternal communion" in the Eucharist, must lead to "a determination to transform unjust structures and to restore respect for the dignity of all men and women, created in God's image and likeness" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* [Sacrament of Charity], no. 89). Transformation by Christ in the Eucharist should compel us to address injustices that degrade the life or dignity of others—the poor, the unborn, immigrants, the elderly—all brothers and sisters in need.

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