

Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion Workshop

The celebration of Mass, as the action of Christ and of the People of God arrayed hierarchically, is the center of the whole of Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the faithful individually. For in it is found the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring Him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit. (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal, #16*)

ECCLESIA DE EUCHARISTIA

Pope St. John Paul II (Holy Thursday, April 17, 2003)

- The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates *the heart of the mystery of the Church*.
- The Second Vatican Council rightly proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is “the source and summit of the Christian life”.¹
- “For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth: Christ himself, our passover and living bread. Through his own flesh, now made living and life-giving by the Holy Spirit, he offers life to men”.²
- The Church was born of the paschal mystery. For this very reason the Eucharist, which is in an outstanding way the sacrament of the paschal mystery, *stands at the centre of the Church's life*.
- It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation. The Son of God became man in order to restore all creation, in one supreme act of praise, to the One who made it from nothing. He, the Eternal High Priest who by the blood of his Cross entered the eternal sanctuary, thus gives back to the Creator and Father all creation redeemed.
- The Eucharist is indelibly marked by the event of the Lord's passion and death, of which it is not only a reminder but the sacramental re-presentation. It is the sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated down the ages.³

¹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5.

³ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 47: “... our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his body and blood, in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout time, until he should return”.

- When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord's death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and "the work of our redemption is carried out".⁴
- "The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood".⁵
- "Taking part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is the source and summit of the whole Christian life, they offer the divine victim to God, and offer themselves along with it".⁶
- Christ's passover includes not only his passion and death, but also his resurrection.
- It is as the living and risen One that Christ can become in the Eucharist the "bread of life" (*Jn* 6:35, 48), the "living bread" (*Jn* 6:51).
- it is a presence in the fullest sense: a substantial presence whereby Christ, the God-Man, is wholly and entirely present⁷
- The Eucharistic Sacrifice is intrinsically directed to the inward union of the faithful with Christ through communion
- Through our communion in his body and blood, Christ also grants us his Spirit
- The Eucharist is a straining towards the goal, a foretaste of the fullness of joy promised by Christ
- Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life: *they already possess it on earth*, as the first-fruits of a future fullness which will embrace man in his totality.

⁴ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 3.

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1382.

⁶ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

⁷ Encyclical Letter *Mysterium Fidei* (3 September 1965): AAS 57 (1965), 764.

ENCYCLICAL LETTER
ECCLESIA DE EUCHARISTIA
OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS
PRIESTS AND DEACONS
MEN AND WOMEN
IN THE CONSECRATED LIFE
AND ALL THE LAY FAITHFUL
ON THE EUCHARIST
IN ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHURCH

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Pope St. John Paul II begins the encyclical by saying “The Church draws her life from the Eucharist.” How have you / do you “draw life” from the Eucharist?
- The Second Vatican Council rightly proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” How is the Eucharist the “source” or font of the Christian life for you? How is the Eucharist the “summit” or peak of the Christian life for you?
- “The Mass makes present the sacrifice of the Cross.” It makes Christ’s one, definitive redemptive sacrifice always present in time. How do you experience the ‘re-presentation’ of the sacrifice of the Cross when you attend Mass?
- “Taking part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice [the faithful] offer the divine victim to God, and offer themselves along with it.” How are you able to offer yourself along with Christ to the Father during Mass?
- How does taking part in the Eucharist help you to be committed to changing your life and increasing your sense of responsibility for the world?