

**THIS ARTICLE IS RECOMMENDED READING FOR:  
BASIC COURSE, LESSON 12; AND  
ADVANCED COURSE, LESSON 20.**

## **THE HOLY EUCHARIST – The Triple Sacrament-The Triple Source of Grace**

by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.

It was Pope John Paul II who coined the term, *Triple Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist*. He describes it in his first Encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*. What does *Triple*



*Sacrament* mean? It means that the Holy Eucharist, although one Sacrament, is really one Sacrament on three different levels:

1. As the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Holy Eucharist is the Sacrifice-Sacrament.
2. As Holy Communion, the Holy Eucharist is the Communion-Sacrament.
3. As the Real Presence, the Holy Eucharist is the Presence-Sacrament.

### **MEANING OF SACRAMENT – SOURCE OF GRACE**

Suppose we look first at the meaning of a Sacrament. A Sacrament is a visible sign, instituted personally by Christ during His visible stay on earth, which actually gives or produces the grace signified. The visible sign and the grace conferred is distinctive for each of the seven Sacraments.

As the *Baltimore Catechism* succinctly states: “A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.” It goes on to explain, “When the sign is applied to the one who receives the Sacrament, it signifies inward grace and has the power of producing it in the soul. The external action performed by the minister of the Sacrament is called a *sign* of the inward grace because it signifies and represents outwardly what is produced inwardly and invisibly in the soul. The sacramental signs actually effect what they represent. . . . [and they] were instituted by Christ. Our Lord is the Author of all the Sacraments. Only God can give to material things, or to outward signs, the power of producing grace in the soul.”

Let’s look closer at the three essential elements of a Sacrament.

#### **1. Visible/Outward Sign**

Every Sacrament has a distinctive *visible sign*. By *visible* we mean that somehow it is perceptible to the senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell or touch. For example, in Baptism, what is externally signified is a cleansing or washing; what is internally taking place is the cleansing of the soul.

Consequently, each one of the seven Sacraments has something *external* that symbolizes, signifies or identifies what is going on *in* the human spirit.

#### **2. Instituted by Christ**

Each of the seven Sacraments was *personally, historically and individually instituted* by Christ. This bears emphasis. Why? Because nowadays, there are so many strange ideas that question Christ instituting any of the Sacraments. As I remember, attending a convention in Chicago at which about 100 both Catholic and Protestant theologians were in attendance, the opening keynote speech was given by a prominent Catholic theologian in which he could not have been clearer that “Jesus Christ DID NOT institute the Sacrament of the priesthood; it is a later development, second or third century.” That, in one sentence, is a good definition of Protestantism. Among the definitions I give for Protestantism is “priestless Christianity.” We have to be very clear that Christ DID indeed institute all seven Sacraments, including here the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

#### **3. Infallibly Confers Grace / Each has a Distinctive Sacramental Grace**

Thirdly, the Sacraments infallibly confer grace, sanctifying grace, actual graces, and each Sacrament has its own distinctive sacramental grace. Moreover, the moral condition of the one administering the Sacrament does not determine whether the grace will be conferred. It will be conferred! As Saint Augustine says, “When Peter baptizes, it is Christ Who baptizes. When Judas baptizes, it is Christ Who baptizes.” Whether the priest at the altar may be a Peter or a Francis of Assisi in sanctity, or a Judas laden with sin; the Mass is

valid. It does not depend on the sanctity of the one who, in this case, changes bread and wine into the living Body and Blood of Christ.

What is the distinctive grace? It is the grace which corresponds to each Sacrament. There are seven Sacraments because Christ wants us to receive seven different kinds of grace.

**Dispositions of recipient determines amount of grace received**

And finally, although the grace is conferred just because the Sacrament is administered—*ex opere operato*, the disposition of the one receiving the Sacraments determines how much of the grace is received or whether, for example, any grace is received—*ex opere operantis*. Thus, a person coming to Holy Communion who has the Faith, believes, and is in the state of grace, that person receives both Jesus Christ and the grace from the Sacrament. Another person who does not believe or has abandoned the Catholic Faith or is knowingly and consciously in grave sin, does that person receive Christ? YES. Does the person receive grace? NO. And he commits another grave sin, now of sacrilege.

These three elements are all present in the triple Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

**THE EUCHARIST AS A TRIPLE SACRAMENT**

The Eucharist is a *Sacrament*; something visible, sensory perceptible, which confers the grace signified. But note, the Eucharist is a Sacrament not only as Holy Communion, but also in the Mass which is a Sacrament and in the Real Presence which is also a Sacrament. **Does this NEED to be made known!** What then do we mean? This is the language of Pope John Paul II. The doctrine is as old as the Church; but the clarification of the ideas that I will try to share with you are the ideas clarified and, I would say, very strongly identified by this Holy Father who is clear regarding the Eucharist as first the *Sacrifice-Sacrament*.

What are we saying? The Mass, as Mass, is a Sacrament. *Just because Mass is offered, grace is given* and we call that the SACRIFICE-SACRAMENT.

Secondly, the Eucharist is COMMUNION-SACRAMENT. What do you suppose most Catholics would tell you if you ask them, “What is the Sacrament

of the Eucharist?” They will tell you without a second thought, “Well that’s Holy Communion.” That’s true but only 33.3% true. There is one thing I hope to share and clarify for you in these classes and that is to realize how the Eucharist is a SACRAMENT THREE TIMES OVER.

THE MASS IS A SACRAMENT and confers grace. It gives grace not only, but especially, to those attending Mass. The Mass gives grace, first of all, to all believers.

“Does the Mass give grace to the whole world?” YES. To Gorbachev? YES. To Matthew Fox? YES. And I am being very charitable; and they need the grace.

So the Mass is a Sacrament, then HOLY COMMUNION IS A SACRAMENT; which I believe no Catholic would question. The visible sign or external symbol is *receiving the Holy Eucharist into the mouth as Food and Drink, to nourish*. So what then is symbolized or signified? It is the internal *spiritual nourishment of the soul*.

The Holy Eucharist, then, is also the PRESENCE-SACRAMENT. By the Real Presence we mean the Presence of Jesus Christ now on earth until the end of time, *True God and True Man*, in the fullness of both natures contained by the Eucharistic Species. Jesus Christ abides in the fullness of His human and divine natures in the Blessed Sacrament. He is there in a way that He is not present anywhere else except in Heaven. He is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament with everything that constitutes His glorified humanity, just as He is fully present in Heaven.

There is no problem whatsoever, or no test of the faith, to say that Christ is present with the fullness of His *divine* nature because Christ had been present as God on earth long before the Incarnation took place. Christ as God is present everywhere just as the Father and the Holy Spirit are present everywhere – omnipresent. However, Christ is not present everywhere in His glorified human nature, that is, as the Word of God Incarnate. As man, Christ is present only in Heaven at the right hand of the Father, and on earth, in the Holy Eucharist. The real test of faith is whether we believe that in the Eucharist:

- Christ is present not only as God but is present as Man. (However, that is not enough.)
- It is not merely that He is present as Man, but that He is present as Man in the fullness of His *bodily or corporeal nature* and in the fullness of His *spiritual human nature*. (However, that is not enough.)

- Christ is present with His Body and Blood which are living and possess all the physical properties of a living human being. (However, that is not enough.)
- Christ’s human Soul is present, with a human mind and a human will. Therefore, Christ has two intellects, one human and one divine; and He has two wills, one human and one divine. Consequently, Christ’ Soul is present in the Eucharist with the fullness of His human mind and His human will, and both are distinct from the divine mind and will.

We must believe all these truths. Christ is present in the Holy Eucharist–Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

What is the simplest way of identifying the Real Presence? The Real Presence is Jesus Christ Who is living in Heaven at the right hand of His heavenly Father and on earth only and exclusively in the Eucharist. When we believe in the Real Presence we believe that, having risen from the dead and ascended at the right hand of His heavenly Father, Christ did not leave the earth. The real difference between a Catholic and a non-Catholic is that a Catholic believes that Christ is present in Heaven and on earth. The expression “and on earth” is our faith in the Real Presence.

How this needs, dear Lord, to be believed, understood and put into practice. A Bishop friend of mine wrote an article just about a year ago for a national magazine for priests and the outside cover of the magazine was a church door with a padlock on the outside. The title of his article was, “The Greatest Tragedy in America, Closed Churches.” Jesus Christ is there. Why? So we would be there too; but more as we go along.

So just because Christ is present, grace is conferred. One of my greatest joys is to give conferences or lectures when the Blessed Sacrament is present, and better still, exposed. Because Jesus Christ, just because He is in a church or a chapel, He gives grace.

We will now go over the Holy Eucharist on each of these three levels and see how every one of the essential parts of a Sacrament are verified in the Holy Eucharist.

## THE EUCHARIST AS SACRIFICE - SACRAMENT

First then, the Eucharist as *Sacrifice-Sacrament* and we repeat, and try to remember to repeat it often enough that it sticks in your mind, **THE MASS IS THE SACRIFICE-SACRAMENT.**

How is the Mass a Sacrifice-Sacrament?

- 1) It is a *sacrifice* because it is the same Jesus now offering Himself to His heavenly Father on the altar, who has offered Himself on Calvary.
- 2) The Mass is a *Sacrament* because it is mainly through the Mass that the graces won for a sinful world on Calvary are distributed to the human race.

The Mass is a Sacrament and, unlike Holy Communion which gives grace only to the one who receives, believes, and is in the state of grace, the **MASS GIVES GRACE TO THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD.** As one great writer on the Sacrifice of the Mass said, “Except for the Sacrifice of the Mass being offered on thousands of altars throughout the world, the world would long ago have been destroyed because of its sins.” Amen.

## Visible Sign of the Sacrament and Sacrifice of the Mass is the Double Consecration/Signifies Christ Infallibly Conferring Grace

First then, what is the visible sign of the Mass as a *Sacrament*? The visible sign is the *separate Consecration*, first of the bread over which the priest pronounces the words, “This is My Body,” then the Consecration of the wine, “This is My Blood.” There must be **TWO** Consecrations otherwise there is no Mass. What is signified historically is the separation of Christ’s Blood from His Body on the Cross which caused His death. Christ could not have died of any sickness or disease. Why not? Because He was not a sinner. Christ could only have died by some physical force imposed on Him from the outside—to be exact, being nailed to the Cross. What then caused the death of Christ? He bled to death. Christ’s Body was drained of His Blood and He died. That draining, that separation that took place on Calvary, is symbolized by the separate Consecration of the bread and wine.

Secondly, Christ on the Cross offered a SACRIFICE. The essence of *sacrifice* is not that which is sacrificed, but there must be something surrendered. As our definition of sacrifice states: *Sacrifice is the surrender of something precious to God. So surrender, precious, and God are the three constitutive elements, as we say, of every sacrifice. The real heart of sacrifice is not the precious thing that is given up, it is the giving up, it is THE SURRENDER; try to remember this.*

In other words, Christ on the Cross did indeed allow Himself to be crucified and thus bled to death. What is the *precious* thing that He offered? He offered His human life! However, the heart of the sacrifice is NOT IN WHAT IS OFFERED but in the offering, in the SURRENDER, in the giving up; and even more specifically, in giving up to GOD. And this is what Jesus did on the Cross because He had a human will. The main reason God became man was so that He would have a human will. He needed a human body and a human soul (intellect and free will) to be able to suffer and die. Hence, the main reason to become man was that He might have a human will with which then He could willingly, voluntarily, freely, lovingly offer His human life to His heavenly Father.

God became man because God as God cannot offer sacrifice. God cannot surrender anything as God; He wouldn't be God. God cannot gain anything. God cannot lose anything. Yet, out of love for us God became man that He might be able to sacrifice, uniting His human nature with His divinity in such a way that, as God, He would be nailed to the Cross and shed His Blood. And with His human free will, united with the divine will of the Second Person of the Trinity, He surrendered Himself for us.

In the Mass, can Christ any longer die? NO.

Although Christ can no longer die, can Christ sacrifice? YES. All because Christ has two wills; one human and one divine. There is a heresy that claims that Christ had only one will, it is called monothelitism. Does Christ now have a human will? YES. Once God became man He will remain man for all eternity.

On the altar, with the Consecration, who becomes present on the altar? Jesus Christ, true God and true man. Only if He is *true man* does He have a Body and a Soul. Can Christ's Body and Soul any longer separate by death? NO. Does Christ have a free human will now? YES. Does Christ on the altar after the Consecration have a human will? YES.

That is why the Mass is a *sacrifice*—hear it and don't forget it. The essence, the heart of sacrifice is the

WILL. If Christ could die again, He would; but He can no longer die. But can He be willing to die? YES. His willingness to die is signified, symbolized by the *double Consecration*. The double Consecration is our *visible sign* of Christ having a human free will with which, if He could die He would, every time that Mass is offered.

To illustrate the principle, I use this as an example:

My parents were both born in present Slovakia which, finally, after more than forty years of control by Communism, is now freed. Suppose a person in now occupied communist China, or then Russia, Hungary, Slovakia or Albania, is forbidden to teach Christianity. Suppose a Catholic teacher behind closed doors in the classroom told the children, "Now children, I'm not supposed to teach you this because it is against the law, but let me teach you how to make the *Sign of the Cross*. Do this with me, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen." Suppose that teacher will then tell the children about Jesus, Mary and Joseph and talk to them about Christ's conception, birth, death on the Cross and Resurrection on Easter Sunday. The children were forbidden to say anything to their parents but somehow the teacher was reported to the civil authorities. Suppose he was taken into custody, put on trial and condemned to death for breaking the law. And, by the way, as Mother Teresa has told me more than once (she is a native of Albania), for a priest to offer Mass in Albania means capital punishment—death. Suppose (back to the example of the teacher) after being in prison for a while, he was told to behave himself and to never again teach about Christ or Christianity; and he was then released from prison. Suppose the teacher went back to the classroom and continued teaching Christianity. Suppose that happened seven times. Each time the teacher was condemned to death and reprieved. The seventh time the judge says, "Now look, this is too much." So then the teacher was executed. My question: How many times did that teacher offer his life to Christ? Seven times. Am I clear? Get the point?

What Christ did was to reverse the process. He began by offering Himself ONCE and telling us that every time that a double Consecration is performed that it signifies, "*My willingness to offer Myself. If I could die, I would die for you each time that Mass is offered.*"

I repeat, the ESSENCE OF SACRIFICE IS IN THE WILL and Christ has a human will on the altar because, and let's repeat it, there is a Man Who is God on the altar. God became man. And this God-Man offers Himself every time that the double Consecration

is made in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In other words, the double Consecration is essential—**WITHOUT IT THERE IS NO MASS.**

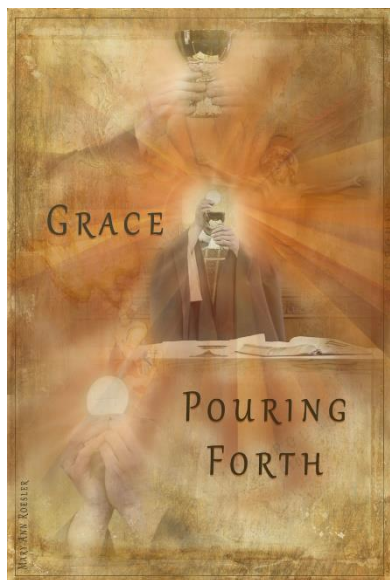
What about the Offertory? The Offertory and the Communion of the Mass are necessary for a licit (lawful) Mass, but not absolutely necessary to have a valid Mass. A valid Mass requires that the priest be validly ordained, have the proper intention and matter, and correctly perform the double Consecration. A valid Mass means that the grace is conferred. In any case, I repeat, it is essential that there be the double Consecration in order for there to be a valid sacrifice and, therefore, a valid Mass.

### Double Consecration was Instituted by Christ

When was the Mass instituted? At the Last Supper, that's what Jesus did. He separately consecrated, first, the bread and then the chalice of wine; and by doing that He instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass. Because the Mass is a SACRAMENT it confers numerous graces on the whole human family.

### Double Consecration Infallibly Confers Grace

The Holy Mass is the single most effective means by which Christ applies the merits He gained, and by which He communicates the graces He won by His



Sacrifice on the Cross. Every Mass *infallibly* confers grace to the whole world, to the whole Church, to all the participants, to the one for whom the Mass is offered and, of course, to the priest. The priest must be in the state of grace to say a licit Mass and he commits a sacrilege if he offers Mass not in the state of grace. But the Mass is valid

whether he is in the state of grace or not. And notice, infallibly, just because the Mass is offered, grace is given. And now in countries like ours the number of Masses offered are dwindling. If there is one thing we should pray and beg God for and urge, encourage and persuade priests to do, is to offer the Sacrifice of the

Mass every day. To say Mass every day is the desire of the Church and, surely in light of what we are saying, is necessary for the world because graces are conferred on the whole world and, dear Lord, does the world ever need God's grace.

### Distinctive Sacramental Grace of the Mass

What is the particular grace that the Holy Eucharist as SACRIFICE-SACRAMENT confers? We have said that every Sacrament has its own distinctive sacramental grace—so it does. In general, the distinctive sacramental grace of the Eucharist is the *sacramental grace to love*. To love more deeply, to love more firmly, to love more generously both God and others. But then, what is the distinctive sacramental grace of the Mass? It is the *grace to love God with the generosity of self-surrender*. In other words, it is the grace to surrender our wills constantly to the mysterious and often demanding will of God.

The language of love is sacrifice. That is what God did. God became man so that He might be able to sacrifice Himself which He could not have done had He not become man. I hope that what we are sharing in class will be a case for an examination of conscience. “Gee, I never realized what God really wants from me is myself.” That’s all that life is about—that’s all, that’s all. It is that simple and that hard.

### Disposition determines the grace received from Sacrament-Sacrifice of the Mass

What determines how much grace we receive? Our disposition. What does that mean? It means that we are to get as much grace from the Sacrifice of the Mass in the measure that we are disposed to surrender our will to God. What is the most precious thing on earth for every human being? It is one's OWN SELF-WILL. The better disposed we are the more grace we will receive. Say now this prayer,

*“Dear Jesus, I offer you my whole heart to do with me as you will. Amen.”*

Depending on how fervently we have said this prayer, the Masses being offered in Calcutta, Rome, wherever Masses are going on, the more graces we will receive. We will then be better equipped, more convinced with our mind and more generous with our wills to surrender the only real sacrifice we are called upon to make to God, our own *self-will*.

That is why, for example, we should make the sacrifice required in going to Mass. Some argue, “But I need my sleep.” Who doesn't? “Oh, gosh, I'd have to get up an

hour earlier.” So I ask, “What do you do at night?” I find out some watch television, or read books or magazines. I say, “Go to bed earlier, get up earlier and go to Mass.”

By the way, if as a result of these classes, you are not going to Mass more often, I wasted your time—I won’t ask for an examination of conscience in public. So far we have somewhat covered a subject which is as vast as the ocean, the Eucharist as Sacrifice-Sacrament.

### **THE EUCHARIST AS COMMUNION-SACRAMENT**

As we did before regarding the Sacrifice of the Mass, we will go down the essential elements of a Sacrament for the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

#### **Visible Signs are Receiving the Consecrated Host and Precious Blood/Signifies Nourishment of the Soul**

What is the visible sign of the Communion-Sacrament? The visible sign is *receiving the Consecrated Host and Chalice of Precious Blood*. They are taken as Food and Drink. They are received from outside of ourselves, into ourselves, *as a sign of nourishment*. So in Holy Communion the external sign symbolizes internal nourishment. Holy Communion, therefore, is a means of obtaining supernatural sustenance for the divine life we received at Baptism. We believe that Holy Communion is Jesus Christ, in the fullness of His humanity and the plenitude of His divinity, Whom we receive into our bodies in order to sanctify our souls.

There are two chapters of John’s Gospel that should always be seen together. They are:

1. Chapter 3 in which Our Lord foretells the necessity of Baptism, “...unless a man is born again of water and the Holy Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”
2. Chapter 6, “...unless you eat of the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood you shall not have life in you.”

What did Jesus mean? He meant, being born is not enough; being baptized is not enough. I have asked mothers how long a child can survive without food. Maybe a couple of weeks? “No Father.” How soon does the baby want to be fed after birth? “Immediately, Father.” In other words, having our natural life is not enough. The natural life must be sustained by food and drink. So having the supernatural life that we receive at Baptism is not enough, it must be nourished by supernatural Food and Drink.

What is the one food and drink that Christ tells us is indispensable for remaining in His supernatural life? **THE EUCHARIST**. Christ uncompromisingly taught that He was giving His real Body and His real Blood for our spiritual nourishment. Hence, the Church has always taught that Holy Communion is the reception of the living Christ Himself. By the way, some may have wondered, “Are we allowed to receive Communion twice in the same day?” YES. The first Communion can be received during Mass or outside of Mass. The second Communion must be received during Mass. Provided that you get there by the time of the Offertory, you may receive a second time on the same day. Why? I can give you one good reason. If ever the world, especially the believing Catholic world, needed nourishment for a supernatural life, it is today. There are too many casualties, spiritual deaths, among those who had been baptized and believing Catholics, even among consecrated religious and ordained priests. We need nourishment to stay supernaturally alive, and that nourishment is mainly provided, Christ tells us, by feeding on His own Body and Blood.

#### **Holy Communion was Instituted by Christ**

Secondly, again, the Communion-Sacrament was instituted by Christ at the Last Supper. Notice what Jesus did—He separated the two Consecrations which meant that from then until the end of time there will be no valid Mass without the *double Consecration*. He also gave Communion and what did He say? “Take and eat, take and drink.” The Church tells us that by these words Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist as the Sacrament of Communion. So the Holy Eucharist was instituted at the Last Supper. However, just for the record, although Christ at the Last Supper changed bread and wine into His own Flesh and Blood, instituting the Holy Eucharist, when did that first Mass really finish? It finished on Calvary on the next day. And Jesus, remember at the Last Supper, even used the future tense, this is My Body which **WILL BE** given up for you. This is My Blood which **WILL BE** shed for you. Christ, as Saint Augustine says, gave His disciples Himself when He gave them Holy Communion.

#### **Holy Communion Infallibly Confers Grace**

Holy Communion infallibly confers grace upon the communicant provided that person is in the state of grace. This needs to be shouted from the house tops, if I were in India—from the top of the Himalayas. We must be in the state of grace. And there is one thing the present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, is telling the



Bishops, charging them, pleading with them, “In the name of God, will you please have your people go to the Sacrament of Confession. I am told just about all of your people going to Mass on Sundays go to Communion; but I’m also told that very few, comparatively speaking, go to Confession.”

We must be in the state of grace to receive Holy Communion. Now just for the record, speaking theologically, unless we are sure that we are not in the state of grace, we may go to Communion. In other words, we need not confess. I say we are not obliged to confess what we are not sure is a mortal sin. If I have any reasonable doubt that I have committed a mortal sin, I may go to Communion and I’m not even, absolutely speaking, obliged to confess. We are obliged to confess what we know for sure are mortal sins. Three things are necessary for a sin to be mortal. If any of the three are missing, the sin is not mortal:

- 1) the matter involved must be serious;
- 2) one must have knowledge that it is wrong;
- 3) one must freely choose or intend to commit the action or omission.

In other words, it is a mortal sin if we knew what we were doing, if we realized it was gravely forbidden by God, and if we did it anyhow—fully awake, fully alert and yet we did it. Catholics are human beings, they do sin; and they do also sin mortally. The Sacrament of Penance is the precondition for making sure that every time we go to Communion we are in the state of grace. The Sacrament Christ instituted to restore supernatural life to a person in mortal sin is the Sacrament of Penance, not the Sacrament of Holy Communion. So the grace conferred is received, provided I am in the state of grace.

### **Distinctive Sacramental Grace of Holy Communion**

The distinctive sacramental grace of Holy Communion, still under the supernatural virtue of charity, is to *love God above all things and to love others as Christ loves them*. In other words, without Holy Communion we will not love God as He wants to be loved above all things, especially above the one thing which is always in competition with the love of God, love of OURSELF. Even when we pray, what an effort we have to make to have God on our minds. Our distractions are thinking about “self” when we should be thinking about God. So, love of God above all things and love of others as Christ loves them is the distinctive sacramental grace of Holy Communion. Faith tells us that Christ died on the Cross for sinners. I

hope I will be clear; sinners should be loved more. Oh, and especially when they sin against us. “I’m to love that so-and-so?” YES. Love that so-and-so, so he or she will become such-and-such.

Over the years in marriage counseling, or in teaching the Theology of Marriage to my priest students, I tell them the single most important thing that married people need is frequent, even daily, reception of Holy Communion. If there is one person that places the heaviest burden on your generosity it is your spouse. Oh, it is one thing to love someone during courtship, a year, two years—or in my mother and father’s case, a courtship of two weeks. Just two weeks after they met, they married. But it can be very difficult to live day after day, week after week, with the same person.

That’s why Christ instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist—so we can love and keep on loving people who, by now we are tempted to say, have exhausted our capacity for love. There is more love available, not from you, but from the God, Who became Man so He might die on the Cross out of love, to receive love from man. He is Love Incarnate. We need it. We need HIM. We need to receive Him into ourselves daily so we might love those whom He places in our lives and, thus, show how much we love Him.

### **THE EUCHARIST AS PRESENCE-SACRAMENT**

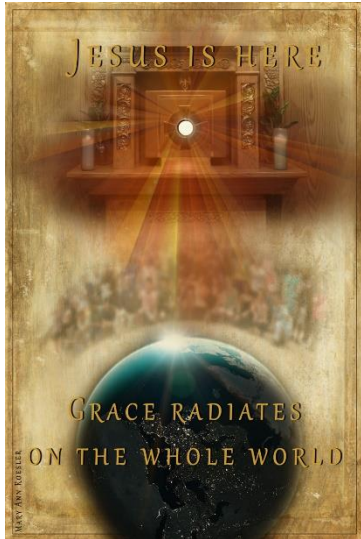
Remember, when we say “Sacrament” we mean *source of grace*. PRESENCE-SACRAMENT means that just because, only because, Jesus Christ is really present on the altar, He confers grace. Jesus is with us in the tabernacle of our churches for two reasons: 1) so that we might adore Him; and 2) so that we may obtain from Him what He will give us only through the Eucharist—Himself and His grace.

### **Visible Signs are the Sacred Species / Real Presence Instituted by Christ**

The visible signs of the Eucharist as Presence-Sacrament are the *sensibly perceptible Sacred Species*; the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. *Species* means that which is sensibly perceived by the bodily senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. In other words, the visible sign for the Presence-Sacrament is what we can perceive. Christ instituted this visible sign of His true Body and Blood—the Holy Eucharist—at the Last Supper. He had in His hands real bread and a chalice of real wine that He changed into His own Body and Blood.

### Visible Signs Signify Christ Infallibly Conferring Grace

Sacraments can infallibly confer grace not only when a Sacrament instituted by Christ is conferred, but when, as now, in the Holy Eucharist when no action is



performed, no words are pronounced but there is something sensibly perceptible. What is it? It looks like bread and looks like wine, but it is those *sensibly perceptible properties* that are the external manifestation or evidence of the infallible conferral of grace.

Just because a consecrated Host is on the altar or in the tabernacle, as long as those sensibly perceptible properties remain, they are the *externally sensibly perceptible evidence* of Christ conferring grace. JUST BECAUSE JESUS IS HERE, GRACE EMANATES, grace radiates, grace is conferred. Notice it is “infallibly” conferred. In other words, Christ is God, God is Almighty, therefore Christ in the Eucharist is Almighty. This is the same identical Jesus that walked the streets of Palestine and raised Lazarus from the dead. This is the living Christ. You talk to Him; you know He is there listening. He sees you; and with the eyes of faith you see Him. Christ is here to work miracles. Christ could not work miracles in a particular district because of the people’s lack of faith. Why don’t we have more miracles? We don’t have enough faith. And you don’t nurture faith in Christ’s Real Presence by hiding tabernacles, by removing pews from churches, or by telling people not to kneel. How can we expect miracles if we do not live our Faith?

### Distinctive Sacramental Grace of the Real Presence

What is the distinctive sacramental grace conferred by the Holy Eucharist as Presence-Sacrament? The distinctive sacramental grace available from the Real Presence is *a sense of intimacy with Christ—a growing awareness of Christ’s presence in our midst*. This means:

1. A growing consciousness that Jesus is risen and glorified and alive as God-become-man.
2. A growing attention to His existence as the Son of God Who became the Son of Mary, Who is now at the right hand of His Father.
3. A growing awareness of His continuous activity in the Church He founded, through her teaching hierarchy under the successor of Peter, and through the Sacraments of which Christ is the Principal Agent.
4. A growing sense of the indwelling of His Spirit of Love in our souls by sanctifying grace.
5. A growing belief that every person, every event, every apparently casual occurrence in our lives is really Jesus Christ working in the world of space and time to channel to us the graces He won for us on Calvary.
6. Above all, a growing realization that He is on earth, in our midst, no less than in Palestine.

### Disposition determines the amount of grace received—involves our minds and wills

Can two people be physically near one another and not be present to one another? YES. I call this the intimacy of the New York subway in the rush hours. Experience tells us that we can be physically near to someone without having a sense of being spiritually close to that person. Physical proximity is no guarantee of spiritual intimacy. And the opposite is also true. Someone we love may be a thousand or more miles away. Yet the moment I think of that person with loving affection, he or she becomes present to me.

*Presence* is a relationship between persons. Christ, we may be sure, is always lovingly thinking of us. We are constantly on His mind and constantly in His loving will and, as we say, in His loving Sacred Heart. In a word, we are always “present” to Him. Indeed, we may say that He instituted the *Real Presence* in order to bring home to us how constantly present we are to Him. In the deepest sense of the word, He wants us to be near to Him. We, therefore, are on Christ’s mind and in His Heart in the Holy Eucharist; both as God and as Man, constantly.

But what about us? If we are always present to Him, is Christ in the Eucharist always present to us? In one sense, yes, if we understand presence as “thereness.” Since Christ is always in the Eucharist with the fullness of His humanity and the plenitude of His divinity, He



is there whether we think of Him or not, whether we are aware of Him or not.

So presence as “thereness” is independent of us. What an important statement that is and that is the Faith of the undivided Catholic Church. We affirm with the fullness of realization, as the Council of Trent so emphatically defined it, that in the Eucharist is the *Totus Christus*, the whole Christ, with all that makes Him what He is; He is in the Blessed Sacrament.

Presence as “beingness,” presence as reality, is independent of our awareness. But what a difference there is between what we believe and how we live. Christ is, indeed, in the Eucharist, but in order to live out what the Church and Christ Himself want us to do, and what He intended when He instituted the Blessed Sacrament, He should be present to us not only physically in reality but also *spiritually in our minds and in our hearts*.

So to have someone *present* to us means that person is in our minds and in our hearts. We, therefore, must start with our minds to think of him present in the Blessed Sacrament. Our thinking doesn’t make Him present, He is already present, but it begins to give us an awareness of His Presence there. If we don’t want to think about Him being present in the Eucharist, we won’t. We do not begin to make Christ present to ourselves spiritually unless and until we begin to think about His being there.

To repeat then, our first action or reaction to Christ’s physical presence in the Eucharist must be to start thinking about Him if we want to make Him also present to us spiritually. What may not be common knowledge, but is just plain religious common sense, is that we have the ability to start thinking about something or someone if we want to!

We must then freely decide to think about Christ, reflecting that HE IS HERE in the Eucharist. We must make that mental effort if we wish to grow in that devotion to the Eucharist which the Church considers essential for all sound Christian living and the very foundation of a life of perfection. That is part one of our responsive reaction to Christ’s Presence in the Eucharist, to be *present with our minds*. But that is not all, it is not enough to just *think* of Christ’s Real Presence. To make the reality spiritually effective in our lives we must also *make Him present in our wills*. How do we do this? Let us remember again, it is we who have to do it.

We go back to our earlier comparison of two persons who are physically separated; but in spite of all the distance of space or, for that matter, of time, they

become present to each other in spirit by first becoming aware of one another, making the mental effort to do so. More important than “mental awareness,” however, is the presence which is effected in “the will.” If these two people, separated by thousands of miles or by hundreds of years (remember, spirit is independent of space and time), if they each will what the other wills, if each wants what the other wants, then they are present to one another, not only by their mental awareness, but by the strongest bond that can unite one spiritual being with another, by the *bond of love*.

Returning to the Eucharist we now ask, what does the Eucharistic Christ want of us? Or better, what does He want us to want in order to be united with Him not only by mental awareness but fully in spirit with our wills? He wants us to want to practice many things, because He taught us so much. But focusing only on the Eucharistic Christ, with a human and a divine will, with special emphasis, *He wants us to want to practice the virtues He practices in the Blessed Sacrament and thus become united to Him not only in mind, but also in will, in a bond of love*. What are some of these virtues in the Eucharist?

**Humility.** He practices perfect humility. No make-believe; He is in the Eucharist. He not only hides His divinity there, which He did during His visible stay on earth, except for those periodic breakthroughs in the cosmos when He worked miracles to give the contemporaries of His day some awareness of His being more than man. But in the Eucharist He hides not only His divinity, as He did in Palestine; He even hides His humanity.

We see and taste only the elements that seem to be bread and wine. Faith tells us they are neither bread nor wine, but He. Talk about humility! Talk about what Saint Paul calls the “kenosis”—God emptying Himself and not revealing the fullness of Who He is. He wants us to cultivate, and what a terrifying comparison, a corresponding humility.

We can rightly shudder at what this demands of us. A corresponding humility constantly means that, in greater or less measure, we allow our gifts and talents and abilities we have to remain hidden. This is the “sacrifice of recognition,” and none is greater, especially when there is a lot to sacrifice. What a sacrifice to offer to the Eucharistic Christ!

**Patience.** In the Eucharist He practices a great patience, remaining in our midst even though we can be so cold and indifferent to His Presence among us. Recall that Saint Margaret Mary would spend hours

before the Blessed Sacrament finding it hard to tear herself away. Christ complained to her while she was kneeling before Him in the Eucharist that what most pains Him is the coldness and the indifference of consecrated hearts, of priests and religious, to the Sacrament of His Love.

Thinking of the growing number of convents without chapels, of priests who seem so casual in handling the Son of God, is it any wonder that Christ complained then to Saint Margaret Mary and complains now, wanting us who have the faith to see behind the veils of the senses, to realize that He is here?

He wants us to be patient in uncomplaining endurance of pain. In fact, “uncomplaining endurance of pain” is one of my favorite definitions of patience. And the worst pain is, as we know, not in the body, but in the spirit.

**Generosity.** In the Eucharist Jesus practices generosity. He is among us in His humanity ultimately for one reason only, in order to bestow those blessings which faith tells us are available only through His human nature. Christ is the way to the Father because He assumed a human nature. It is through this humanity, depending on our faith, that He opens up the largeness of His divinity, willing to give us so much if we only have the faith to ask.

By now we have all learned how good He is. He wants us, then, to be correspondingly generous by giving and giving and not asking or expecting in return. This generosity means mainly giving ourselves, our likes and dislikes being offered up in order to be of help to others whom, as He told us the night He instituted this Sacrament, He puts into our lives that we might show Him how much we love Him.

Let us ask our Eucharistic Lord to help us understand that He is really in our midst and that we may grow in the consciousness of His Presence among us by going beyond mere *mental awareness* in uniting our *wills* with His, and in giving ourselves for Him and with Him and to Him, even as He is so generously giving Himself to us. In this way, we are anticipating the day when there will no longer be any sacramental veils separating Him from us, for Heaven is the Eucharist unveiled.

Consequently, the Real Presence, with its distinctive sacramental grace, engenders and deepens in us the marvelous gift of intimacy with Jesus Christ; *that we think of Him and we love Him*. Consequently, we can *always*, and this is not a hypothetical adverb, we can *always be praying*. The essence of prayer, as we know, is having one’s mind and heart on God and a constant

readiness to do His will. Hence, to develop within us a constant awareness of God’s presence and our love for Him, with an attitude of humble submission and readiness to do His will; gives us an attitude of the heart which allows us to “pray always.”

God became man. Why did He become man? In order that He might be with us and we might, by our faith in His Real Presence, receive what His contemporaries in Palestine received from Him. How do we receive the Real Presence? How do we do it? We receive grace from Christ’s Real Presence BY OUR FAITH—we must believe that Jesus Christ is now on earth in the Holy Eucharist. We must believe that He is in every tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, and on every altar where the Holy Eucharist is exposed for the adoration of the faithful. He will give us grace, but it is a conditional grace, provided that, and in the measure that, we are disposed to receive Him.

Let us close with a prayer:

**LORD JESUS**, we who have the true Faith and believe in the Holy Eucharist are not to keep this Faith to ourselves. We are to share it with others. Dear Lord, we can share our Eucharistic faith only as effectively as we ourselves are Eucharistic believers: believing that You Who died on the Cross continue to offer Yourself in the Sacrifice of the Mass; believing that when we receive You in Holy Communion, we receive the same Jesus Whom Mary carried in her womb for nine months; and believing that when we are before You in the Blessed Sacrament, we are, as Thomas was after Your Resurrection, in the Presence of Our Lord and Our God. Amen.

#### Further Resources:

*Redemptor Hominis*, Redeemer of Man—The first Encyclical of Pope Saint John Paul II, 4 March 1979, #79-81.

*Mediator Dei*, On the Sacred Liturgy—Encyclical by Venerable Pius XII, 20 November 1947. This Encyclical is devoted entirely to the Liturgy. The second section is a treatment of the nature of the Eucharist and our worship in Holy Mass, #66-136.

*Mysterium Fidei*, On The Holy Eucharist—Encyclical of Blessed Paul VI, 3 September 1965. This Encyclical is on the doctrine and worship of the Holy Eucharist. It was issued during the Second Vatican Council.

**THE HOLY EUCHARIST – THE TRIPLE SACRAMENT, THE TRIPLE SOURCE OF GRACE**

**Supernatural Virtue of Charity – to love God and others more deeply, more firmly and more generously.**

