

## ***The Mystery and Miracle of the Most Holy Eucharist***



**“At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet ‘in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.’” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 3, The Sacrament of the Eucharist, #1323.)**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church proclaims that the Eucharist is *“the source and summit of the Christian life.”* Why? Because all the other sacraments and ministries within the Church point to and flow from the Eucharist, the greatest sacrament of all because it contains *“the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely, Christ himself, our Pasch.”* Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical letter on the Eucharist, **MIRAE CARITATI**, called the Eucharist *“the Mystery of Faith”* for in it we encounter the Sacred Humanity and the divine person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Savior, and the sum of all the saving grace of His life, His passion and death, and His resurrection.

The early Church Fathers saw the Eucharist as an extension or continuation of the Incarnation in which Christ came down from heaven so we might have life and have it to the full, wedding God to man and man to God in His Sacred Humanity as God-made-man. The self-emptying love of God which in faith we know as **agape** poured itself out, first in creation, then in the re-creation of fallen man through the Incarnation of the Word made flesh and in the Perfect Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary which made all things new. In these days the agape of God is gifted to us in the profound and Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist which suspends all the laws of nature to make the very Sacrifice of Calvary present on every altar throughout the world each day where Holy Mass is celebrated. This agape of God proceeds, again miraculously, to give us Christ Jesus in His full humanity and divinity as real food in Holy Communion wherein, as we consume Jesus, we are absorbed into Him, transformed into His image by the power of the same Holy Spirit who transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. And more miraculously still, He, the Infinite All Holy One, remains with us until the end of time hidden under the humble species of bread in the Most Blessed Sacrament in the small tabernacles made with our poor hands. Who can explain or understand it, such grace and such love! Over and over Christ abases Himself, lays

aside His glory and veils it from our eyes so He might dwell with us and we might live, not die, for no one can see God as He is and live.

In his encyclical **Deus Caritas Est** , #’s 13 and 14, Pope Benedict XVI ponders on Christ’s act of self-oblation on Calvary which is made present on our altars and is gifted to us in Holy Communion, and on our communion with Christ and each other in that union.

The ancient world had dimly perceived that man's real food—what truly nourishes him as man—is ultimately the *Logos*, eternal wisdom: this same *Logos* now truly becomes food for us—as love. The Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate *Logos*, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving. The imagery of marriage between God and Israel is now realized in a way previously inconceivable: it had meant standing in God's presence, but now it becomes union with God through sharing in Jesus' self-gift, sharing in his body and blood. The sacramental “mysticism”, grounded in God's condescension towards us, operates at a radically different level and lifts us to far greater heights than anything that any human mystical elevation could ever accomplish.

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Cor 10:17). Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians. We become “one body”, completely joined in a single existence. Love of God and love of neighbor are now truly united: God incarnate draws us all to himself. We can thus understand how *agape* also became a term for the Eucharist: there God's own *agape* comes to us bodily, in order to continue his work in us and through us. Only by keeping in mind this Christological and sacramental basis can we correctly understand Jesus' teaching on love. The transition which he makes from the Law and the Prophets to the twofold commandment of love of God and of neighbour, and his grounding the whole life of faith on this central precept, is not simply a matter of morality—something that could exist apart from and alongside faith in Christ and its sacramental re-actualization. Faith, worship and *ethos* are interwoven as a single reality which takes shape in our encounter with God's *agape*. Here the usual contraposition between worship and ethics simply falls apart. “Worship” itself, Eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented. Conversely, as we shall have to consider in greater detail below, the “commandment” of love is only possible because it is more than a requirement. Love can be “commanded” because it has first been given.

Our **Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation** helps us understand how this encounter with the *agape* of God is made possible to us. It is Jesus, the Eternal High Priest who is also the Victim Lamb at every Mass, Who speaks the words, “This is my Body.” “This is my Blood.” **At this moment of consecration when those words are**

**spoken, the substance of the bread and the substance of the wine are really and truly transformed, changed, by the power of the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body and Christ's Blood, though the accidents, the outward appearances of bread and wine, remain the same.** This **doctrine of transubstantiation** is a matter of Faith with no room for compromise. This is the mystery and miracle of the Eucharist and we know it is true because we have Christ's word on it and He cannot deceive us for He is God and there can be no falsehood or contradiction in God. The mystery of the Eucharist is laden with miracles that defy the laws of nature: the one and same sacrifice of Calvary is made present, not repeated or re-presented, but made present on every altar where Mass is celebrated; Christ is made present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity on every altar at the words of consecration though the appearances remain that of bread and wine; Christ gives Himself to us as real food in Holy Communion though the species of bread remain; and Christ in His full humanity and divinity remains with us in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar under those same humble species of bread. We know all this with that higher form of knowledge that is Faith. And the miracle goes further. Not only does Jesus come to me but he comes to every other person who receives Him, millions all over the world and yet He is one and indivisible and fully and really present to each person though He is received by the multitudes.

As we know from Scripture, it is Satan's ambition to destroy Christ and His Church. The blasphemy committed against this Most Holy Sacrament and the heresies concerning it are but one of his efforts to reach his goal through those under his influence. There are three great errors against the Eucharist we must mention. The erroneous view of **consubstantiation** states that at the words of consecration **the substance of the bread exists together with the substance of Christ's body**; nothing is changed and the accidents remain the same. The erroneous view of **transignification** implies that at the words of consecration **only the meaning which the words signify changes**, that the bread no longer signifies food but now signifies Christ. A third erroneous view, **transfinalization**, says that the **goal or finalization, the purpose** of the bread and wine **changes** from physical food to spiritual food. These three views and any that minimize the mystery, the miracle and the profundity of the Eucharist to mere symbol or pious remembrance are errors contrary to the very words of Christ, "This is my Body. This is my Blood." Did not Jesus Himself call His flesh real food and His blood real drink unto eternal life for those who believe in Him?

St. John's Gospel tells us how many followed Jesus because they saw the signs and wonders He worked, especially the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Shortly after that miracle Jesus gave His discourse on the bread of life, identifying Himself as the Bread that came down from heaven to give us eternal life if we believe in Him.

**"Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is**

**the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. ...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. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.”** (The New American Bible, Jn 6: 47-57.)

Many of the Jews and followers of Jesus questioned how He could claim that He came down from heaven and could give His flesh to eat and His blood to drink or give eternal life and raise one up on the last day. Many walked away saying this word was too hard for them to accept. For many of us, receiving Holy Communion has become so routine that we barely think at all on what we are doing or on what miracle is taking place on our altar and who it is we are receiving and what receiving Him binds us to know and do. After Christ asked his apostles, “Who do men say that I am?” He asked them, “Who do **you** say that I am?” He asked them if they, too, found His word too hard and would walk away. With Peter may we respond in faith:

**“Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”**  
(The New American Bible, Jn 6:68-70.) **“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”** (Mt 16:16.)

Hearing Christ’s words and Peter’s profession of Faith, we can surely understand how the Eucharist is the center of our lives and that of the Church and how it sums up and demands of us a true and uncompromising Faith. Jesus did not water down his words to accommodate those who would not or could not accept them. His Word is true because He is Truth. Our present world is increasingly reverting to paganism and self-worship, toward the tyranny of one despotic leader or idol or corporate lord after another, because they do not want to accept the Word, the Truth of the one true God and the Son He sent into our world to reveal Himself to us and to be our light and defense against the darkness and lies of Satan. In the message of Our Lady of America® given to Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil Jesus speaks to this lack of faith and love for Him in our world.

**“My little white dove, do you know what I find most lacking in the world today? It is FAITH. There are so few souls that believe in Me and My love. They profess their belief and their love, but they do not live this belief. Their hearts are cold, for without faith there can be no love. Pray and sacrifice yourself, My child, that faith may once again find entrance into the hearts of men.”** (Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA®, Fostoria, Ohio, Pg. 5, May, 1954.)

Today many walk away from this awesome mystery and miracle of the most Holy Eucharist, from the encounter of the Real Christ as truly present in His Church, His living Body, and in this Blessed Sacrament on our altars and in our tabernacles, just as many turned away when Jesus walked on this earth. It is the same Christ, Redeemer, Brother, Friend, our Beloved and Lord whose wounded hand we touch and whose Heart embraces us when we receive Him in faith into our own bodies and souls. Our Lady of America® spoke to Sister Mildred in this regard on April 3, 1981.

**Beloved daughter, to many the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass no longer has meaning. These have lost that spiritual sensitivity of reaching out and touching the wounded hand of my Son. In a special way, during the Holy Sacrifice Jesus comes in close contact with those who meet Him in a profound act of faith in a deep sense of His Divine and human presence. It is a great loss when one loses the spiritual sight of the Son that the Father sent to guide us into the Eternal Vision. (Sister Mildred Neuzil, Diary, Pg. 40.)**

Sometimes when faith is wavering, Christ gives us Eucharistic miracles to increase our faith, e.g., the miracle that occurred in the 8<sup>th</sup> century in Lanciano, Chieta, Italy when the Sacred Host bled. Scientific tests confirmed that the blood is real human blood and the Host is real human flesh. That miraculous testimony to the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist remains fresh through all these years. That the Eucharist is real food is evidenced by those chosen souls who have lived for years on nothing but the Eucharist. Around the world, particularly in the context of the Holy Mass, many bring their sick, the blind and the lame, those troubled by demonic spirits, to the healing grace of Christ in the Eucharist even as the people brought them to Jesus in Galilee or Judea. It has always been the custom of the Catholic Church to administer Holy Viaticum to the dying and the Eucharist and the anointing of holy oil to the sick. Many have been healed in body and soul in this encounter with the Divine Physician of the Eucharist as truly as those who encountered Him and were healed so many years ago. It is to the Eucharist that we come when we are troubled or filled with doubt and like Thomas, place our fingers into the wounded hands of Jesus and fall on our knees, crying, "My Lord and my God!" It is in the Eucharist that we meet the self-emptying Agape of God which obligates us as a community of believers to imitate Him in works of charity and mercy. In the Eucharist we not only receive the Body of Christ but we become His living, Mystical Body by the grace and life that is poured out on and into us. As so many saints or unbelievers have declared, if we truly believed the Eucharist is all we say it is, we would fall on our knees and crawl to the altars where Holy Mass is said; we would sit before the Blessed Sacrament and never leave for nothing else could satisfy us in body or soul.

Baptism plunges us into Christ's Paschal mystery and His Priesthood and Victimhood which is the memorial He left us in the Eucharistic sacrifice. Throughout the ages of the Church, chosen souls have been called to mirror Christ's self-oblation as Priest and Victim, Suffering Servant of Yahweh, to a higher degree than the rest of us. As we follow the life of Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, the visionary of the message of Our Lady of America®, the words of Christ Himself make clear to us that

she was called to be such a victim soul for the salvation of others. Sister Mildred wrote her spiritual director, Father Paul F. Leibold, in June of 1956, regarding her encounter with Jesus on the First Friday of that month of the Sacred Heart while making a night hour of adoration. Jesus made known to her the sorrow of His Heart over the ingratitude and indifference shown to Him in the Sacrament of His Love. When she went to bed, He came to her. She states:

**Jesus came to me holding a large cross and a crown of thorns. He said to me smiling, as though He knew what the answer would be (He did of course), "I come with My cross and My crown of thorns, will you accept Me My spouse?" You know the only answer I could give Father. Who could refuse Jesus anything? During the night I awoke and Jesus said to me, and He said it with a profound emphasis, "I have placed you upon the Altar of Sacrifice." [She writes that on June 14<sup>th</sup>, anniversary of her perpetual union with Jesus, He asked her again:] "Bride of My Heart, do you still wish to suffer all things to give Me to souls?" I answered, "Yes, yes dear Lord, I am poor and wretched, and unworthy, but you know what is in my heart."**

**He said, "My little white dove, will you then continue to wear the Crown of Thorns, and permit yourself to be nailed to the Cross?" I told him in the best way I could, how much I desired Him to do with me just as He desired. So in this way my desires are wholly united to His.**

**When I received my last Obedience, Father, it was a bit of a let-down, as you can guess. Yet I tried to rise above my feelings realizing that God works all things for our good and His Glory. I am glad that Our Lord is not afraid to use me in any way that He pleases. There are times when pain blurs my vision a bit, but it is not long before His enlightening Grace makes me see again with that clear light God reserves for the lowly and pure of heart. At this time, Father, Our Lord assured me of His continued help. [He said to me that evening after I had received the Obedience:] "I will be with you wherever you are, spouse of my Heart. You have nothing to fear." This was after I had said to Him, "Dear Lord, what are You doing to me?"**

Is this not the pledge of the Eucharist? To be with us wherever we are until the end of time! Does Jesus not ask us, too, in the Eucharist to be espoused to Him and to all who are His and to be willing to accept the crown and the cross and to suffer all things in order to give Him to souls? Should Jesus say to us, "I have placed you upon the Altar of Sacrifice?" would we understand that our life must be buried with His in the Paschal Mystery of the Eucharist wherein He lays down His life for us, gives it to us, and asks us to do the same for others? Is our will as readily surrendered to the will of God as Sister Mildred's was? Perhaps these words from Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical **Deus Caritas Est**, #17, might give us food for thought.

**The love-story between God and man consists in the very fact that this communion of will increases in a communion of thought and sentiment, and thus our will and God's will increasingly coincide: God's will is no longer for me an alien will, something imposed on me from without by the commandments, but it is now my own will, based on the realization that God is**

**in fact more deeply present to me than I am to myself.[10] Then self-abandonment to God increases and God becomes our joy (cf. Ps 73 [72]:23-28).**

We cannot end any reflection on the Eucharist without also reflecting on Mary, Mother of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus and Mother of God who became the Ark of the New Covenant when Jesus took flesh in her womb. She did not only signify God's Presence, as in the Ark of old; she was in constant communion with God's Holy Presence within her. Visionaries in private revelations tell us that Jesus gave His Mother her First Holy Communion at the time of the Last Supper. Then, upon His Ascension into heaven, He miraculously preserved the Eucharist physically within her beneath her heart from one communion to the next, and did so until the infant Church was established enough to build a suitable dwelling and tabernacle to house the Most Blessed Sacrament. Jesus performed this miracle to comfort His Mother, to satisfy His own Heart and for the Church in order to fulfill His promise to remain with it every moment from His Ascension until the end of time. Could we ever imagine that Jesus, who asked this dear mother who wanted to die and be with Him to remain behind for the sake of the Church, this dear woman with whom He spent His entire earthly life and with whom He shared His passion as with no other, would not also want to remain with her? It would be most unworthy of Him to leave her whose only desire was to be with Him, and who was prepared from all eternity to be the fitting vessel for His Sacred Humanity, without His continued Presence. But--it would be most worthy of so noble a Son to work such a miracle so that He might remain with her on earth even as He reigns in His glory at the right hand of the Father in heaven, to stay with her until her work on earth was finished and she would be assumed into heaven to sit at his right hand as Mother and Queen, forever! Mary was the First Tabernacle, in flesh, for Jesus, keeping the Most Blessed Sacrament, hidden but real, near her heart so there would be no moment on earth when Jesus would be absent from His Church, for she is the Mother of His Mystical Body, the Church, as truly as she is Mother of His human body. In this magnificent way she again became the Ark of His New Covenant with all men. Let us seek Mary's help in coming to know and understand and love this great mystery and miracle of the Eucharist, to live in its profound grace so as to be transformed into the image of Christ and the Body of the Lord. Let us ask her to lend us her own Immaculate Heart with which to receive Him so we may never receive Him unworthily. Let us ask her to adorn us with some of her own beauty, purity and fullness of grace so we might be more pleasing to her Divine Son. Truly, Mary is the woman of the Eucharist!

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