

Some Notes on the Most Holy Eucharist

What are the parts of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist?

The matter: Bread and wine.

The form: “This is my body” and “This is [the cup of] my blood.”

The minister: Only a priest.

When did Christ institute this sacrament?

Christ instituted this sacrament at the Last Supper, when he commanded his apostles, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). He had previously promised the institution of this sacrament in John 6:51: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

What is the Eucharist?

The Eucharist is Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine.

What happens during the consecration?

During the consecration (when the priest says “This is my body” and “This is the cup of my blood”), the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. This change is called *transubstantiation* since it is a conversion of one whole substance (bread or wine) into another substance (The Body and Blood of Christ). After the consecration, the bread and wine have ceased to exist in reality. The *species* (whatever can be observed or measured) of bread and wine remain because God keeps these species in existence by a miracle. Christ's presence remains as long as the species remain discernible as bread and wine.

What is the Mass?

The Mass is Christ's sacrifice on the cross offered in an unbloody manner. Christ is not re-sacrificed during the Mass because the Mass is not another sacrifice from Christ's but the same sacrifice. The Mass applies the fruits of Christ's redemption to particular persons, times, and places.

St Paul hands on the basics:

“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself” (1 Corinthians 11:23-27).

Who may receive Holy Communion?

A Catholic who has been admitted to first Communion, who is not conscious of any grave sins that have not been forgiven in confession, and who is not impeded by Church law may receive Holy Communion.

How often may one receive Holy Communion?

Can. 917: "A person who has already received the Most Holy Eucharist can receive it a second time on the same day only within the eucharistic celebration in which the person participates, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 921, §2." (*Excerpted from the Code of Canon Law (1983)*)

How does one receive Holy Communion?

The universal norm is to receive Communion on the tongue and kneeling. Everyone always has this right. In the United States and in some other countries, the Vatican has given permission for people to receive in the hand and standing.

What are the holy days of obligation?

In the United States, besides every Sunday, Catholics are bound to attend Mass on:

January 1, the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God; (Unless on a Saturday or Monday)

Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter, the solemnity of the Ascension; (Unless transferred to Sunday)

August 15, the solemnity of the Assumption; (Unless on a Saturday or Monday)

November 1, the solemnity of All Saints; (Unless on a Saturday or Monday)

December 8, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception;

December 25, the solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.