

**THE EUCHARIST AS A SOURCE AND EXPRESSION OF UNITY IN THE  
CHURCH  
AND IN OUR PARISH.**

**THE INVITATION TO MASS IS FROM JESUS HIMSELF. HE IS THE HOST, LITERALLY AND METAPHORICALLY. WE GATHER AS A PARISH COMMUNITY AROUND THE ALTAR, WHICH, LIKE CHRIST, SHOULD BE AT THE CENTRE OF THE COMMUNITY. WITH CHRIST AT THE HEART, ONLY WE CAN BE THE CAUSE OF OUR LACK OF WILLINGNESS, AND FAILURE, TO PROPERLY ENCOUNTER OTHERS AS HE CALLS US TO.**

The Church says the Eucharist is “the source and of our salvation”, and is a perfect re-presentation of the Sacrifice of Calvary, and in sharing in The Mass, we unite ourselves with the offering with Jesus Christ, and are in Communion with him and one another.

We must become what we eat, as The Church proclaims and the Banner states.

When we approach for Holy Communion we are not approaching The Minister (whether ordained or lay), but Jesus Christ himself. To go to another part of the Church to receive Holy Communion to the one we are on (especially during covid and if we say we are trying to maintain social distancing to some degree), to avoid the Minister is like crossing the street to avoid Jesus so that we can meet him somewhere else. Does that make any sense rationally, and, more importantly, if we truly believe, that bread, that host, is Jesus Christ himself?

Jesus said about worship in general: “So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering.” **Matthew 5:23-24** Our interior disposition matters more than our actions, but our actions speak of the purity or malice in our heart.

St Paul advised we should not do things we believe are ok if we know that what we do may cause scandal and the downfall of others. (He uses the example of eating food offered to idols. We know the idols are worthless, and meaningless. But some may judge our actions in a way that causes hurt and disturbance. ) Speaking of worship St Paul says “Far from passing judgment on each other, therefore, you should make up your mind never to be the cause of your brother tripping or falling. Now I am perfectly well aware, of course, and I speak for the Lord Jesus, that no food is unclean in itself; however, if someone thinks that a particular food is unclean, then it is unclean for him. And indeed if your attitude to food is upsetting your brother, then you are hardly being guided by charity. You are certainly not free.” Romans 14: 13 -15 Here St Paul is talking about earthly food. If the food is The Body of Christ then the way we deal with it is even more important, and our inner nature and actions matter much, much, and more.

“For this is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you: that on the same night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and thanked God for it and broke it, and he said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me.’ In the same way he took the cup after supper, and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.’ Until the Lord comes, therefore, every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming his death, and so anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be behaving unworthily toward the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone is to recollect himself before eating this bread and drinking this cup; because a person who eats and drinks without recognizing the Body is eating and drinking his own condemnation. In fact that is why many of you are weak and ill and some of you have died. If only we recollected ourselves, we should not be punished like that. But when the Lord does punish us like that, it is to correct us and stop us from being condemned with the world. So to sum up, my dear brothers, when you meet for the Meal, wait for one another. Anyone who is hungry should eat at home, and then your meeting will not bring your condemnation. The other matters I shall adjust when I come.” 1 Corinthians 11: 23-24

Let us live in Communion, and never weaponise the act of celebrating The Eucharist and receiving Holy Communion. It must always be celebrated with the mind of Christ. He answered the question as to how often we should forgive each other, and bear with each other, out of love and for the sake of The Gospel.

In 1998 in a Teaching Document by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (with those of Ireland and Scotland) they said:

“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

- 1) As Catholic bishops, we have a special care for preserving and deepening the unity of the one body of Christ, his Church, a unity in love and in truth, in holiness and in mission. We are 'eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'. In this endeavour, our particular responsibility is to proclaim the Gospel, and to teach in the name of Christ and his Church. We seek to 'speak the truth in love' so that all may grow together into Christ who is the Head of the Body and the source of our unity. In our longing for unity of faith and life among all Christians, faithfulness to the truth is our first duty and desire.
- 2) It is above all at the Eucharist that Christians become one in Christ, sharing together as 'one body' the 'one bread' of the Lord. An understanding of the Eucharist is essential, therefore, to the search for Christian unity. There can be no full unity among Christians that does not embrace unity in the Eucharist, and no full unity in the Eucharist without a shared understanding of all that the Eucharist contains and signifies. The primary purpose of our document is to present the teaching of the Catholic Church on the mystery of the Eucharist.
- 3) At the heart of the life of the Catholic Church has always been the celebration of the Eucharist, or the Mass as Catholics often call it. Taking part in the Mass is the hallmark of the Catholic, central and crucial to our Catholic identity. The first Christians devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles, to their 'communion' with each other, and to prayer, and met together in their homes for 'the breaking of bread'. Over the centuries, Catholics in many countries have risked their lives in order to celebrate Mass in times of persecution. Their courageous faith remains an inspiration and example to the Catholic community today. For Catholics now, as in the past, the Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole Christian life. It is the vital centre of all that the Church is and does, because at its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, continuing and making available his saving work among us. The Second Vatican Council reminded us: 'the most holy Eucharist holds within itself the whole spiritual treasure of the Church, namely Christ himself, our passover and our living bread'.
- 4) The Eucharist is a most precious gift of the Lord to his Church. It is a mystery to be pondered and revered. At the heart of this document is a presentation of the richness of Catholic teaching on the Eucharist. We offer it with confidence, for this mystery is indeed a life-giving truth, a 'pearl of great price'.<sup>8</sup> We urge Catholics in our countries to refresh and renew their belief in the Eucharist, their understanding of Catholic teaching, and their reverence for this great mystery of faith.”