



LESSON EIGHTEEN

The Holy Eucharist: Christ Feeds Us

Opening Prayer

Spend 1–2 minutes in silence repeating this short invocation from the Gospel of John (6:34):

“Lord, give us this bread always.”

Amen.



Lesson Objectives:

- ❖ Understand the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and recognize how this truth is clearly taught by Jesus in Sacred Scripture.
- ❖ Recognize how the Mass is the new Passover of the New Covenant by connecting the Old Testament Passover and Christ's institution of the Eucharist as the sacrificial meal of our redemption.
- ❖ Identify and reflect on the spiritual and transformative effects of receiving the Eucharist worthily and foster a deep appreciation, reverence, and desire for the sacrament.

BURNING QUESTIONS

- ❖ Why do Catholics believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist when Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me”?

What do you already know about the Eucharist? What have you been told? Is “remembrance” simply mental recollection, or could it be something more?

- ❖ I’m struggling with this teaching about the real presence of Jesus. What if I want to believe but I’m not there yet?

Struggling doesn’t necessarily mean refusing. Some of Jesus’ own disciples wrestled with his words. What, in particular, do you find difficult? What is confusing to you?

Blessed Imelda Lambertini

Feast Day: May 13

Lived: 1322–1333 · Bologna, Italy · Patron of First communicants

With a deep devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist from her earliest years, Imelda begged to make her First Communion when she was only five. At that time, fourteen was the usual age. At nine, she entered a cloistered Dominican monastery. When she was eleven, after the Vigil Mass for the Ascension, a nun saw Imelda kneeling before the tabernacle with a consecrated Host floating and shining above her head. A priest witnessed the miracle and understood Jesus' will. Imelda received her First Communion. She remained kneeling in joy and thanksgiving—and a nun who came to find her later discovered that she had passed away peacefully into eternal life.



“Tell me, can anyone receive Jesus into his heart and not die?”

Blessed Imelda Lambertini

The Bread of Life Discourse

Jesus' Literal Claim

John 6:22–71 is known as the Bread of Life discourse. There, Jesus makes one of the most astonishing claims in all of Scripture: “My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (John 6:55–56). He repeats this claim six times, in increasingly explicit language. When many disciples walked away, he did not call them back to clarify that he was speaking symbolically. He turned to the Twelve and asked: “Will you also go away?” (John 6:67).

The Church in Continuity with Jesus

The early Church understood this literally. St. Ignatius of Antioch, writing around AD 107, called those who denied the Real Presence “heterodox,” saying they abstain from the Eucharist because they “do not confess that it is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ.” The unanimous witness of the early Church—long before the word *transubstantiation* was coined—is that at the consecration, the bread and wine truly become the Body and Blood of Christ.



“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.”

John 6:51

The Eucharist as Passover

The Last Supper in its Context

The entire theology of the Eucharist is embedded in the logic of Passover: sacrifice, covenant, memorial, and sharing in the saving act. At the original Passover, the lamb was slain and eaten; its blood protected the people. At the Last Supper, Jesus identified himself as the Lamb: “This is my body ... this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:26–28).

A Memorial Celebration

In Hebrew liturgical tradition, a memorial makes the original saving event present—not repeated, but made present again. When we celebrate the Eucharist, we do not simply recall what Christ did; we enter into it. The one, unrepeatable sacrifice of Calvary is made present on the altar (see CCC 1362–1367).



“The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’”

CCC 1324

The Effects of the Eucharist

What Communion Does

The *Catechism* identifies several principal effects of receiving the Eucharist worthily (see CCC 1391–1401): it increases our union with Christ; it cleanses venial sin and preserves us from future sins; it commits us to the poor; and it deepens our unity with the whole Church, because by receiving the one Lord, we are made more fully one Body. The Eucharist is also a pledge of the glory to come; it is the summit of our Faith.

Worthiness and Spiritual Communion

To receive the Eucharist in a state of mortal sin is to receive it unworthily, which St. Paul warns brings judgment upon oneself (see 1 Corinthians 11:29). Those in that state should first receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. For those who cannot receive Communion, the Church offers the Act of Spiritual Communion, a prayer of desire for the One who is present on the altar.

“This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Luke 22:19



Discussion Questions

- ❖ How does viewing the Eucharist as the fruit of the Tree of Life increase your desire to receive it?
- ❖ How does understanding Jesus' Crucifixion as an act of spousal love change your perspective on the Eucharist? What does this tell us about the kind of relationship God desires with us?
- ❖ Why do you think Jesus chose the Passover meal to institute the Eucharist? How does participating in the Eucharist connect us not only to Christ's sacrifice but also with the entire history of God's saving actions for his people?

Faith and Fun

In Italy, a Eucharistic miracle occurred in which a consecrated Host became visible flesh and blood, which have been preserved to this day. What is this miracle called?

a. The miracle of Lourdes

b. The miracle of Lanciano

c. The miracle of Fatima

d. The miracle of Assisi

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In this Eucharistic miracle, which occurred in Lanciano, Italy, in the eighth century, a consecrated Host visibly turned into flesh and the wine into blood.



Gestures of Respect

Genuflection

You may have seen Catholics go down on one knee before entering a pew and make the Sign of the Cross. This is genuflection, and it is directed toward the tabernacle—not the altar. The tabernacle is where the consecrated Hosts are reserved, and Jesus is truly present there. Because it is a sacred dwelling, we genuflect before it as an act of adoration.

The Bow

When crossing in front of the altar, Catholics bow rather than genuflect. The altar is the table of the Lord, where the Eucharistic Sacrifice is made present at each Mass (see CCC 1182). We bow toward it to express reverence for Christ and his sacrifice. These are not casual gestures; they are bodily expressions of our reverence for the living God.

INVITED

Living It Out:



Visit a Catholic church or chapel this week. When you enter, bow toward the altar, and before you sit down, genuflect toward the tabernacle to honor Jesus' presence. Sit in silence, observe the tabernacle, and reflect on what it means for Jesus to dwell with his people in this way. Before leaving, genuflect again toward the tabernacle.

Closing Prayer

*My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament.
I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you as if you were already there
and unite myself wholly to you.
Never permit me to be separated from you.
Amen.¹*

1. Alphonsus Liguori, “Act of Spiritual Communion,” in *The Complete Ascetical Works of St. Alphonsus de Liguori*, vol. 6, trans. Eugene Grimm (Benziger Brothers, 1886), 456, lightly edited.

Announcements / Reminders — add notes here