

The History of the Eucharist

- 100 A.D.** Spontaneous prayers and singing
1. Held in homes
 2. Saturday after sundown; part of the Saturday meal
 3. Format: Readings from scripture, prayers for needs, an offering of gifts, a “eucharistic prayer”, and sharing of communion.
- 312 A.D.** Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire
- Eucharist celebrated in larger groups;
1. Bishop presided over these liturgies and was surrounded by the priests. More ceremonies and rituals were added.
 2. Losses some of the intimacy; keeps unity.
- Priests extend bishop’s Eucharist.
- 384 A.D.** Liturgy was translated from Greek into Latin (people’s language) and began to be referred to as the Mass. (Latin used until 1960’s.)
- 500 A.D.** Private masses (intention was to pray for special needs)
- Altar against wall (by 7th century, more than one altar. Went from table of unity to an altar for the priest’s private prayers.)
- 8th - 11th Centuries** (Dark Ages)
- Silent prayers by the priest
- People not actively participating in the Eucharist, their main action became worshipping the sacred objects of the Mass.
- 9th Century:** Eucharistic piety: accented the unworthiness of the people to receive the body and blood of Christ.
1. Confessing sins before each mass
 2. Less frequent reception of communion
 3. Communion on the tongue while kneeling.
 4. Drinking from the cup was eliminated.
- 1000 A.D.** How is Jesus present?
- Transubstantiation
- Emphasize adoration of Eucharist
- Benediction
- Processions with the sacred bread.
- 1500 A.D.** Real presence; sacrificial nature
- 1563:** **Council of Trent:** restated its belief that the bread and wine, through the consecrating words of the priest, **become** and **remain** the body and blood of Christ.

19th Century

Study liturgy

1905 A.D.

Pope Pius X encouraged more frequent Communion

1940s and 50s

Further study of this sacrament

1962-65 A.D.

Vatican II tried to restore the celebration of the Eucharist to its original meaning and form:

1. Celebrating the liturgy in the language of the people
2. Moving the altar to a more central place
3. Giving more emphasis to the reading of scripture
4. Encouraging more frequent reception of communion
5. Eliminating the many unnecessary signs and gestures that accumulated during the Middle Ages
6. Restoring the action of drinking from the cup
7. Communion in the hand
8. Priest facing the people

1985 A.D.

Reform in Eucharist; participation by all

Key Elements of Eucharist

1. Celebrates the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist
2. Sacrifice
3. Meal of Remembrance
4. Meal of Commitment – action central to our lives
5. Meal that proclaims a future vision, a time when Jesus would be with his followers forever.
6. Sign of our unity
7. Called to be Eucharist (to be Christ) to one another
8. We can be transformed by the Eucharist (union with Jesus)
9. Bonds Christians into community
10. Sustains us with the “Bread of life”
11. Empowers us “for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51)
12. Sends us to “love and serve” after **the way** of Jesus.

Eucharist is “sacrament of sacraments” (Thomas Aquinas)

Eucharist is “the source and summit”—“the fount and apex of the whole Christian life.” (Vatican II)