

**Notes on the Eucharist from the
United States Catholic Catechism for Adults**

Pg. 215 – 232, Chapter 17

The Eucharist: The Source and Summit of Christian Life

The new United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, published in July 2006, has a full chapter devoted to The Eucharist: The Source and Summit of the Christian Life. The following information is taken directly from this chapter of the Catechism.

1. The origins of the Eucharist are found in the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his Apostles. He instituted the Eucharist as the memorial of his death and Resurrection and commanded his apostles to celebrate it until his return; ‘thereby he constituted them priests of the New Testament.’
2. The use of Bread and Wine in worship is already found in the early history of God’s people. In the Old Testament, bread and wine are seen as gifts from God, to whom praise and thanks are given in return for these blessings and for other manifestations of his care and grace.
3. The story of the priest Melchizedek’s offering a sacrifice of bread and wine for Abraham’s victory is an example of this. **(GN 14:17-20)**
4. The Gospels narrate events that anticipated the Eucharist. The miracle of the loaves and fish, reported in all four Gospels, prefigured the unique abundance of the Eucharist. The miracle of changing water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana manifested the divine glory of Jesus and the heavenly wedding feast in which we share at every Eucharist.
5. In his dialogue with the people at Capernaum, Christ used his miracle of multiplying the loaves of bread as the occasion to describe himself as the Bread of Life: “I am the living bread that came down from

heaven.....Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you". (**John 6:47- 59**)

6. Holy Communion increases our union with Christ. Just as bodily food sustains our physical life, so Holy Communion nourishes our spiritual life. This Communion moves us away from sin, strengthening our moral resolve to avoid evil and turn ever more powerfully to God.
7. The account of the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist may be found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. See Mt 26:17-29; Mk 14:12-25, Lk 22:7-20, 1 Cor 11:23-26.
8. Jesus changed the bread and wine into his Body and Blood, given now as an offering for the salvation of all people. By the words "Do this in memory of me," Jesus commanded the Apostles and their successors to repeat his actions and words "until he comes again." This practice has continued unbroken for two thousand years right up to the present day.
9. The Mass is a sacrifice in the sense that when it takes place, Jesus Christ, through the bishop or priest celebrating the Mass, makes present sacramentally his saving, sacrificial death on the Cross by which he redeemed us from our sins.
10. This Eucharistic sacrifice is the memorial of Christ's redeeming death. The term memorial in this context is not simply a remembrance of past events; it is a making present in a sacramental manner the sacrifice of the Cross of Christ and his victory.
11. In this divine sacrifice which is made present in the Mass, especially in the Eucharistic Prayer, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross offers himself in an unbloody manner. The Eucharistic sacrifice is offered to adore and thank God, to pray for all our needs, and to gain pardon for our sins.
12. The Eucharistic Prayer includes the *Epiclesis* (Invocation) when the Church implores the power of the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine offered by human hands into Christ's Body and Blood. This is followed by the *Institution Narrative and Consecration* where the priest proclaims Jesus' words at the Last Supper over the bread and

wine. “The power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, make sacramentally present, under the species of bread and wine, Christ’s Body and Blood, his sacrifice offered on the cross for all.”

13. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ is present in the proclamation of God’s Word, in the Eucharistic assembly, in the person of the priest, but above all and in a wholly unique manner in the Eucharist. It is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present. Christ, acting through the ministry of his priests, is both the priest offering the sacrifice and the victim being sacrificed.
14. Since the Middle Ages, the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ has been called “*transubstantiation*”. This means that the substance of bread and wine is changed into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ. The appearances of bread and wine remain (color, shape, weight, chemical composition), but the underlying reality – that is the substance – is now the Body and Blood of Christ, with his soul and divinity.
15. At Mass, the consecrated bread has become Christ’s Body. The consecrated wine has become Christ’s Blood. Jesus Christ, whole and entire, is fully present under each form of the Eucharist. Jesus Christ is substantially present in a way that is entirely unique. This happens by the power of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of the priest’s or bishop’s acting in the person of Christ during the Eucharistic prayer. And we say “AMEN”, that is “Yes, I believe”.
16. The Real Presence of Jesus Christ endures in the consecrated elements even after Mass has ended. Once Communion has been distributed, any remaining hosts are placed in the Tabernacle. If any of the Precious Blood remains, it is reverently consumed. The hosts are reserved to provide Communion to the sick or dying, and to allow the faithful to worship Christ in the reserved Sacrament and to pray in his presence.
17. As a sign of adoration, Catholics genuflect to the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the tabernacle or genuflect or kneel when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for prayer.