

Special points of interest:

- **Prayer**— Anima Christi
- **Catechism of the Catholic Church**—excerpts from the CCC on the great gift of the Eucharist

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Full, Active, and Fruitful Participation

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The Mass is the greatest prayer of the Church, and we are called to full and active participation. What many people don't realize is that this full and active participation is not referring to being an usher, greeter, Eucharistic Minister, Gift Bearer or singing in the choir. At its foundation, true participation in the Mass begins with our interior. Pope Benedict XVI, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis* explains: *The Second Vatican Council rightly emphasized the active, full and fruitful participation of the entire People of God in the Eucharistic celebration. Certainly, the renewal carried out in these past decades has made considerable progress towards fulfilling the wishes of the Council Fathers. Yet we must not overlook the fact that some misunderstanding has occasionally arisen concerning the precise meaning of this participation. It should be made clear that the word "participation" does not refer to mere external activity during the celebration. In fact, the active participation called for by the Council must be understood in more substantial terms, on the basis of a greater awareness of the mystery being celebrated and its relationship to daily life. The conciliar Constitution [Sacrosanctum Concilium](#) encouraged the faithful to take part in the Eucharistic liturgy not "as strangers or silent spectators," but as participants "in the*

sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, actively and devoutly". This exhortation has lost none of its force. The Council went on to say that the faithful "should be instructed by God's word, and nourished at the table of the Lord's Body. They should give thanks to God. Offering the immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn to make an offering of themselves. Through Christ, the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and each other". (52)

At Mass, we are called to offer ourselves along with Christ, to the Father. Our prayer should be directed towards giving Christ our entire life, our strengths and our weaknesses, and allowing Him to

transform and multiply our offering. Our prayer can be simple; "Lord, Jesus I am having a hard time loving my kids. Please take my small weak love, and give me the grace to love as you love," or "Christ, I don't understand why I

have to suffer, but I offer it to you knowing that you bring good out of bad." God has a way of taking something that seems small or insignificant, and making it great. Consider the small offering of five loaves and two fish, which Jesus transformed to feed 5000 people (John 6:9). Or recall the time when after an entire day without a catch Jesus asks his disciples to cast their empty nets to the other side of the

boat. Their small act of faith brought about a catch overflowing with fish (Luke 5:1-8). Or even more miraculous is the humble offering of bread and wine that Christ changes into His very self. There is nothing in our life that cannot be offered with Christ in the Eucharist.

Our full and active participation also includes growing in our understanding of the Mass and sincerely praying the Mass responses. At every Mass we say, "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed." These words should draw us more deeply into the unfathomable gift of the Eucharist. We as sinful creatures are not worthy to receive our God, into us, but the miracle is that God himself gives us the grace to receive His gift.

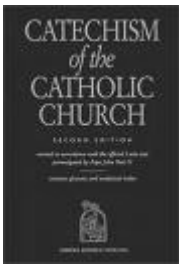
Lord Jesus, we pray that we may continue to grow in our love for You, and that our participation in the Mass may be *full, active, and fruitful* as we humbly offer ourselves with You in the Eucharist.

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FROM THE CATECHISM of the Catholic Church

1323 At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of this death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet' in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.

1368 *The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church.* The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire. She unites herself to his intercession with the Father for all men. In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings,

prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value. Christ's sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with his offering.

1391 The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus.

1407 The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church's life, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once for all on the cross to his Father; by this sacrifice he pours out the graces of salvation on his Body which is the Church.

1413 By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and

glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1640; 1651).

1416 Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ increases the communicant's union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins. Since receiving this sacrament strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ, it also reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.

1419 Having passed from this world to the Father, Christ gives us in the Eucharist the pledge of glory with him. Participation in the Holy Sacrifice identifies us with his Heart, sustains our strength along the pilgrimage of this life, makes us long for eternal life, and unites us even now to the Church in heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints.

Recommended Reading The Mass/The Eucharist

For the Beginner...

The Lamb's Supper

By Scott Hahn

With Us Today

By Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

The Blessed Sacrament - 12 audio tape series

By Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

Digging Deeper...

Ecclesia De Eucharistia

Pope John Paul II

SACRED SCRIPTURE



I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that

comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us (his) flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you,

unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me."

John 6:48-57

Prayer

Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me; Body of Christ, save me; Blood of Christ inebriate me; Water from the side of Christ, wash me; Passion of Christ strengthen me; O good Jesus, hear me; Within your wounds hide me; Separated from you, let me never be; From the evil one protect me; At the hour of my death, call me; And close to you bid me; That with your saints, I may be, praising you forever and ever.

Thoughtful Questions

- Do I fully and actively participate at Mass? How can I more fully participate at Mass?
- How does the Eucharist show us the love of Christ?
- How does the Mass bring meaning to the rest of my life?
- How can I make the best use of time when Jesus is actually present in me after Holy Communion?