

Ten After Ten Session 67: The Sacrament of the Eucharist, continued

1337 The Lord, having loved those who were his own, loved them to the end. Knowing that the hour had come to leave this world and return to the Father, in the course of a meal he washed their feet and gave them the commandment of love. In order to leave them a pledge of this love, in order never to depart from his own and to make them sharers in his Passover, 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.

1338 The three synoptic Gospels and St. Paul have handed on to us the account of the institution of the Eucharist; St. John, for his part, reports the words of Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum that prepare for the institution of the Eucharist: Christ calls himself the bread of life, come down from heaven.

1339 Jesus chose the time of Passover to fulfill what he had announced at Capernaum: giving his disciples his Body and his Blood.

1340 By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning. Jesus' passing over to his father by his death and Resurrection, the new Passover, is anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the kingdom.

1341 The command of Jesus to repeat his actions and words "until he comes" does not only ask us to remember Jesus and what he did. It is directed at the liturgical celebration, by the apostles and their successors, of the memorial of Christ, of his life, of his death, of his Resurrection, and of his intercession in the presence of the Father.

1342 From the beginning the Church has been faithful to the Lord's command.

1343 It was above all on "the first day of the week," Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection, that the Christians met "to break bread." From that time on down to our own day the celebration of the Eucharist has been continued so that today we encounter it everywhere in the Church with the same fundamental structure. It remains the center of the Church's life.

1344 Thus from celebration to celebration, as they proclaim the Paschal mystery of Jesus until he comes, the pilgrim People of God advances, following the narrow way of the cross, toward the heavenly banquet, when all the elect will be seated at the table of the kingdom.

1345 As early as the second century we have the witness of St. Justin Martyr for the basic lines of the order of the Eucharistic celebration. They have stayed the same until our own day for all the great liturgical families.***

1346 The liturgy of the Eucharist unfolds according to a fundamental structure which has been preserved throughout the centuries down to our own day. It displays two great parts that form a fundamental unity:

–the gathering, the liturgy of the Word, with readings, homily, and general intercessions;

–the liturgy of the Eucharist, with the presentation of the bread and wine, the consecratory thanksgiving, and communion.

1347 Is this not the same movement as the Paschal meal of the risen Jesus with his disciples? Walking with them he explained the Scriptures to them; sitting with them at table “he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.”

1348 Christians come together in one place for the Eucharistic assembly. At its head is Christ himself, the principal agent of the Eucharist. He is high priest of the New Covenant; it is he himself who presides invisibly over every Eucharistic celebration. It is in representing him that the bishop or priest acting in the person of Christ the head (*in persona Christi capitis*) presides over the assembly, speaks after the readings, receives the offerings, and says the Eucharistic Prayer.

1349 The Liturgy of the Word includes “the writings of the prophets,” that is, the Old Testament, and “the memoirs of the apostles.” After the homily, which is an exhortation to accept this Word as what it truly is, the Word of God, and to put it into practice, come the intercessions for all men, according to the Apostle’s words: “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings, and all who are in high positions.”

1350 Then, the bread and wine are brought to the altar; they will be offered by the priest in the name of Christ in the Eucharistic sacrifice in which they will become his body and blood. It is the very action of Christ at the Last Supper — “taking the bread and a cup.” The Church alone offers this pure oblation to the Creator, when she offers what comes forth from his creation with thanksgiving.

1351 From the very beginning Christians have brought, along with the bread and wine for the Eucharist, gifts to share with those in need. This custom of the collection, ever appropriate, is inspired by the example of Christ who became poor to make us rich.

1352 The anaphora: with the Eucharistic Prayer—the prayer of thanksgiving and consecration—we come to the heart and summit of the celebration:

In the preface, the Church gives thanks to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, for all his works: creation, redemption, and sanctification. The whole community thus joins in the unending praise that the Church in heaven, the angels and all the saints, sing to the thrice-holy God.

1353 In the epiclesis, the Church asks the Father to send his Holy Spirit on the bread and wine, so that by his power they may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and so that those who take part in the Eucharist may be one body and one spirit.

1354 In the anamnesis that follows, the Church calls to mind the Passion, resurrection, and glorious return of Christ Jesus; she presents to the Father the offering of his Son which reconciles us with him.

1355 In the communion, preceded by the Lord’s prayer and the breaking of the bread, the faithful receive “the bread of heaven” and “the cup of salvation,” the body and blood of Christ who offered himself “for the life of the world.”

***We call this food Eucharist, and no one may take part in it unless he believes that what we teach is true, has received baptism for the forgiveness of sins and new birth, and lives in keeping with what Christ taught.