

Participation in the Celebration of Eucharist

Deepens union with Christ and calls us into communion with one another



TARGET AUDIENCE

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Overview

This Object teaches students about the Eucharistic community; the importance of taking part in the celebration of the Eucharist and of sharing a meal together.

The multimedia element is comprised of a series of ten photographic slides taken at different Eucharistic celebrations and which highlight key moments in the sacrament.

Teacher Background

Teachers are encouraged to review the 'Exploring the Mass' section of the DVD Rom *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* to deepen their understanding of the scriptural, historical and theological foundations of the Eucharist.

In particular, the following aspects of *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* provide entry points and context for this Learning Object:

- Within the pathway 'Theological Reflections' watch the videos 'The Received Tradition', 'We go to God Together', and 'Liturgical Catechesis'. The content of the video is developed further in the excerpts taken from either the essay *Theological Reflections on the Mass and on The Roman Missal* or *Living a Eucharistic Life* by Msgr. Kevin Irwin. The excerpts can be accessed by clicking on the 'Read More' arrow, or else you can download the essay by clicking on the 'View Essay' button.

Where appropriate, use this material with the students.

Supporting Content

This text supports the focus of the multimedia element.

Church tradition teaches that the origins of the Eucharist are to be found in the Last Supper of Jesus and how the early community obeyed Jesus' command to 'break bread' in His name (Acts 2: 42). This remembering of the Last Supper became a central ritual for Christians when they gathered together. In the earliest times, the Eucharist was celebrated along with a shared meal in the homes of local Christians.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes a Eucharist celebrated in

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Supporting Content

connection with a common supper shared in the homes of the Early Christians. This supper included the blessing of the bread and wine, the breaking of the bread, and Communion. As the numbers of Christians grew, the Eucharist as a sacred meal separated from the common meal.

Believers today still remember and celebrate the Last Supper on Holy Thursday. For Jews, this time is the beginning of the Jewish Passover Festival. The bread and wine are symbols of nourishment and food for the Christian journey. Believers take part in the Eucharist to give thanks to God, and share this meal as a community. In community believers gain strength from each one who has gathered.

The obligation for all Catholics to attend and participate in Sunday Mass is built on the belief that without the Eucharist we cannot effectively be the Church for 'cut off from Christ we can do nothing'. This obligation is based on two commands:

- The command of Jesus: 'Do this in [memory] of me' (Luke 22: 19), which he gave to his followers at the Last Supper;
- The third of the Ten Commandments: 'Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy' (Exodus 20: 8), which is now celebrated on a Sunday to remember the Resurrection of Jesus on that day.

The Eucharist deepens union with Christ and calls us into communion with one another. The Eucharist remits sin and calls us to a deeper conversion in Christ.

So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; ⁵⁵for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. (John 6:53–56)

When people see a gathering of Church members, such as at Mass, they see the Body of Christ. This is a sign of the invisible reality that these people are in spiritual union with Christ.

People throughout the world gather for Mass. This is because the Church includes people from different nationalities, cultures and ethnic groups. Catholics all over the world are a sign of Jesus drawing together people of all nationalities, bringing them closer to God and to each other.

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Supporting Content

The four qualities of the Church are that as a community it is:

- One
- Holy
- Catholic
- Apostolic.

Catholics express their belief in these central teachings about the qualities of the Church when they pray The Apostles' Creed. The Apostles' Creed is an early formulation of the Church's basic belief dating from the time of the apostles. The Nicene Creed draws from the wisdom of the first two ecumenical Councils in 325 and 381.

For Reflection and Discussion: Ideas for Use

Select one or more of the following activities for students to complete.

- 1 **Look up different dictionary definitions of 'community' and write them on the board. To assist students in completing their task, it may be helpful to have a class discussion. A useful exercise before a class discussion is: think in pairs then share with the whole class. Then invite students to define 'community' for themselves.**
Look up dictionary definitions for the word 'community' to help you define it in your own words.
- 2 **Invite the students to reflect and share on the following questions:**
 - Does your definition of 'community' reflect your experience of gathering to celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday? List the similarities and differences. Can you explain the differences? How can a greater sense of community be created?
 - Members of the Christian community have an experience and/or encounter with Christ that draws them into a union of common faith and practice. What does Christian community mean to you?
 - In what ways does your family dinner reflect the Eucharistic meal?
 - When have you and your friends gathered to celebrate something important in your life? How did you do it? In what ways does this reflect the Eucharistic meal?

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Teacher Professional Development Resources

[General Instruction of the Roman Missal: An Introduction](#)

[The Assembly and their Ministry at Mass](#)