

WORK OF THE PEOPLE: THE CATHOLIC MASS

SNAPSHOT 3: EUCHARIST

VIDEO SUMMARY

We are the Body of Christ. This is revealed in scripture and made present in a new way in the Eucharist. Coming together as a community to receive the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist affirms our belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ, both in the consecrated bread and wine and in each of us who receives it. During the Eucharistic prayer, the priest asks the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. By receiving this sacrament, we too are transformed. We are not only united to Christ, but also to one another in our shared belief. This part of the Mass is the time of utmost unity. That is why we stand together in the communion procession, sing together, and each receive what was consecrated on the one altar.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Each communicant makes a gesture of reverence – a simple bow of the head – before receiving communion, and exchanges a dialogue with the communion minister: “The Body of Christ.” “Amen.”
- Our “Amen” affirms our belief that *this is* the Body of Christ and that, through our reception, *we are* the Body of Christ.
- Reception of communion is the time of utmost unity; this is reflected in our words and actions at this point in the Mass.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How does the Eucharist unite us to other Catholics, both within our parish and around the world?
- In the Eucharistic Prayer, we hear the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: “Take and eat; take and drink.” How are these words relevant for us today?
- How have you experienced the Body of Christ alive in your parish?

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- The next time you receive communion, be sure to take your time, do the gesture of reverence, and look at the minister when saying “Amen.”
- In your own words, explain the Catholic belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.
- Look through your parish bulletin for ways to be the Body of Christ in your community.

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH SAY?

- “When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of each communicant. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood.” (*The General instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 160)
- “As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which Christ our Passover was sacrificed, is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on, and, in the sacrament of the eucharistic bread, the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ is both expressed and brought about. All men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life strains.” (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 3)
- “Through Communion, the faithful, though many, receive from the one bread the Lord’s Body and from the one chalice the Lord’s Blood in the same way that the Apostles received them from the hands of Christ himself.” (*The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 72)