

FAMILY: CELEBRATE AND LIVE THE EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

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The starting point for Eucharistic spirituality is the table of the Lord Jesus, a truth affirmed at the Second Vatican Council and underscored in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the church, namely, Christ himself, our Pasch” (CCC 1324).

This year the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ on the 18th day of June, Sunday. This yearly celebration invites us as individuals, spousal couples and families to celebrate the Eucharist daily, on Sundays and on other occasions, to imbibe the Eucharistic spirituality and to live the same in our daily life.

The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament commanded by Christ for the continual remembrance of his life, death and resurrection, until he comes again. The Eucharist, the Church's sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, is the way by which the sacrifice of Christ is made present, and in which he unites us to his one offering of himself. It is a sacrament of faithful relationships, a sign of unity, a bond of divine love, a special Easter meal. In it, Christ is received, the inner self is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us (cf. SC 47).

“Being Christian” is not just a matter of understanding the mystery of Christ but an experience of faith and life in Jesus. The personal experience of Christ is wonderfully an original part of Christian existence, especially when we compare it with other, non-Christian models of religious life.

A comprehensive Eucharistic spirituality encompasses three aspects: celebration, contemplation, and mission.

Celebration—Gathered at the Table

For Christians, the paschal mystery—the dying and rising of Jesus Christ—is God's greatest act of salvation. By our union with Christ in this sacrament, we die to sin and

rise to new life with him. Thus, we experience the power of the Eucharist to renew and transform us as “we offer to the Father our own lives along with the hopes and sufferings of all those with whom we are working to build a society based on justice and love”

In the Gospel of St. John, we read the dialogue between Jesus and his first disciples: The two disciples heard John the Baptist saying – “There is the Lamb of God”. On hearing this they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What do you seek?” They answered “Rabbi where are you staying?” Jesus said, “Come and see”. These two disciples began to live with Jesus. With time, they discovered that he is the Teacher, the Messiah and the Son of God. So too, with us. We progress in this knowledge of Jesus Christ travel on our journey through life, nourished and sustained by the strength and grace of the Eucharist.

Contemplation—Remaining at the Table

The Passover of the Lord Jesus is at the center of God’s redemptive plan; it is also the source of contemplation of that mystery. We internalize the celebration that makes our whole life a continuation of the celebration. Christ’s presence in the sacrament calls for a prayer of presence and reflection on all that God has wrought in salvation history. It makes us increasingly more aware of and grateful for God’s faithfulness and love. Hence, we live a life full of praise, thanksgiving, of reconciliation and intercession, as a Church and for the whole world.

The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion with Jesus on earth. “Abide in my Love” –Jesus compares himself to the vine and his disciples to the branches: “Abide in me and I in you”. Communion with Jesus is communion with the Father: “I am in my Father and you in me and I in you” (Jn. 14:20). This is the Trinitarian Dimension of Incorporation into Christ. Therefore, we enter into communion with God through Christ, under the action of the Holy Spirit. It is the way that God himself has established.

Mission—Sent from the Table

The final act of the celebration of the Eucharist is the dismissal, the sending. The table of the Lord inevitably leads to mission. This sacrament calls us to share in the life and mission of the Lord, and we give priority to activities that manifest the riches and demands of the Eucharistic mystery in all its dimensions.

The two disciples of Emmaus ran from the table of their encounter with the risen Christ back to Jerusalem to announce that they had seen him in the breaking of the bread. The apostles, filled with the fire and power of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, left the Cenacle, where they had shared the Last Supper with Jesus, to begin the church's universal mission.

In every place and circumstance across the centuries, taking inspiration at the Eucharistic table we go forth in his name to preach the Gospel, feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, heal the sick, clothe the naked, and encourage all on the journey of life. We who gather at the table, who meet Christ in his word and sacrament, and in each other, are called to bring his life and love to those around us through committed lives of witness and service.

It is thus to live "with Jesus" according to Jesus' standards. Hence it is living our life according to faith, hope and charity and not according to the standards of egoism, usefulness and naked rationality. To live with Jesus is thus to live with the Church and in the Church. The prayer that Jesus taught, the "Our Father", obliges Christians to be in communion with each and every human person. The vocation to the family is by its very nature, a personal and communal experience of Christ; it is life in Christ and in the Church for a particular mission in the World.

Living a Eucharistic Spirituality

The Mass (Missa) has that name because all who participate are given a mission (missio) as they are sent forth to "fulfill God's will in their daily lives." In other words, we are called to live the Mass even after we leave the church building. That includes living as Christ did, observing the liturgical seasons, availing ourselves of the other sacraments, being devoted to the Eucharist reserved in the tabernacle, and giving loving service to others¹.

The Eucharistic spirituality is also to be lived by the family. The Lord is present there in all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes. He reigns there, with his joy

and his peace. It is up to us to experience the same. This will happen only when we actually participate in the Eucharistic celebration, making ourselves as an offering with Christ to the Father and live this Eucharistic spirituality².

The married couple is also called to live a spirituality of supernatural communion. The Trinity is present in the temple of marital communion. He dwells deep within the marital love that gives him glory³. Those who have deep spiritual aspirations should not feel that the family detracts from their growth in the life of the Spirit, but rather see it as a path which the Lord is using to lead them to the heights of mystical union.

If the family is centered on Christ, he will unify and illumine its entire life. Moments of pain and difficulty will be experienced in un-ion with the Lord's cross, and his closeness will make it possible to surmount them. In the darkest hours of a family's life, union with Jesus in his abandonment can help avoid a breakup. Gradually, "with the grace of the Holy Spirit, [the spouses] nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, they grow in holiness through married life and this transforms their difficulties and sufferings into an offering of love.

This is a never-ending vocation born of the full communion of the Trinity, the profound unity between Christ and his Church, the loving community which is the Holy Family of Nazareth, and the pure fraternity that exists among the saints of heaven⁴.

The Eucharist is above all a *celebration of unity*, of the efforts they are making in their families and small groups to be one. When the presiding minister raises the host, we are powerfully challenged to be body of Christ. "Though we are many, we all become one, for we share in the one bread and the one cup" (1 Cor. 10:16-17). How can they possibly partake of these mysteries and fail to be united? If people driven by class division celebrate the sacrament, it becomes an empty gesture. With the Christians in Corinth who are falling into this error, Paul is blunt: 'It is not the Lord's supper you are celebrating' (1 Cor. 11:20). St. Paul invites individuals, families and communities to celebrate and live the Eucharistic communion in their day-to-day life and living.

To live this Eucharistic spirituality is also to live in hope. It means to welcome, defend, protect and give life. In a world that seems to despise, reject, humiliate and kill life, the Christian is called to a new proclamation of Jesus Christ: "The Word of

Life” (1Jn.1:1) and his “Gospel of life”. The Gospel of life is a concrete and personal reality, not a simple reflection or an illusory promise of a better future. So welcoming another child into the family is a wonderful way of proclaiming the Gospel of life.

Just as the soul dwells in the body, but is not of the body so also the Christian dwells in the world but is not of the world. May the celebration of the Solemnity of The Body and Blood of Christ, transform you to be the living Christ in this world-the messenger of life.

Ref.:

1. Oscar Lukefahr, C.M.
2. cf. AL315.
3. cf. AL314.
4. cf. AL 325.