

St. Mary's of the Lake, Watkins Glen, NY
St. Benedict's, Odessa, NY



The Greatest Gift: The Eucharist, Part I

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The Greatest Gift: The Eucharist, Part I

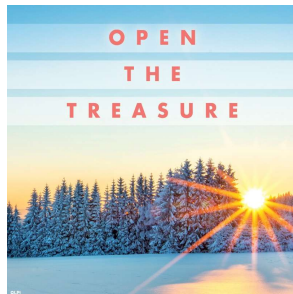
Webinar Tips

- All participants are muted to reduce background noise
- If slides are not fully visible, check at the top center of your screen for "fit to window" under arrow.
- If you would like to ask a question, at the bottom of your screen you should see a box with the letters "Q & A". Click it and you can type your question. It will show on my screen.
- In addition to the slides, you should see a video of me. It should appear in the upper right of your screen. It should not block any significant content on the slides. If it does, you can drag it around.

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Opening
Prayer

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Why this series?



Why a
Three-Year
Eucharistic Revival?

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In the evaluations from my last series someone asked:

- How do we convince all Catholics about the importance of Mass and the Real Presence?

In answer:

- The Eucharistic Revival seeks to help people know that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist and to comprehend the fullness of what we celebrate in the Eucharist.

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- Why do you receive the Eucharist?
- Do you miss the Eucharist when you can't receive it?
- What does it mean to you to be able to receive the Eucharist?

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This series will focus on the Real Presence and Receiving It

- For more on the Eucharist as a Sacrament, see my previous series - *Sacraments: Channels of God's Grace* – <http://www.renewaloffaith.org/sacramentsvideo>
- For more on celebrating the Eucharist at Mass, see my previous series - *Uncovering the Treasures of the Mass* – <http://www.renewaloffaith.org/massvideos>

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The Greatest Gift: The Eucharist, Part I

The Sunday Obligation

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2180

"The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: **"On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass."** "The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day."

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2181

"The Sunday Eucharist is the **foundation** and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, **unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants)** or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin."

Cf. Code of Canon Law, 1245-1248

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The Obligation is Important

The obligation is important. For example, at times we might visit family in nursing homes more as an obligation than desire.

Fr. Rolheiser – Why does an alcoholic keep going to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings when he/she hasn't been drinking? He/she goes to keep from drinking (*Our One Great Act of Fidelity*, 77).

→ We shouldn't wait until we fall to come to Mass. We need grace to help keep us from falling.

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The Sunday Obligation

“But families that sustain community also gather regularly, ideally daily, irrespective of whether there is a special occasion or not. They don't just gather when the energy is good, when everyone is at his or her best, when nobody is bored or angry, and when some occasion merits the effort. They come together regularly despite tedium, boredom, low energy, busyness, distractions, and interpersonal tensions” (Rolheiser, 47, my emphasis).

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From Obligation to Why We Need the Mass As Part of the Lord's Day

When your cell phone, laptop, or tablet, goes weak/dead, what do you do? You plug it in to charge it. In fact, we normally don't wait for them to go dead before we charge them.

Where do we go to recharge our souls?

To Mass.

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More than an Obligation Sunday as the Lord's Day

Third Commandment – Keep the Sabbath Holy

- <http://www.renewaloffaith.org/the-lord-s-day.html>
- *Dies Domini* by Pope John Paul II - http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_05071998_dies-domini.html
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2168-2195

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Does Livestreaming Fulfill the Sunday Obligation?

This question strikes at the very center of the Eucharistic Revival.

- For those who are homebound – Yes!
- For those who are able to come, livestreaming
 - Misses the community aspect
 - Takes a minimalist approach to Mass
 - **You don't receive the Eucharist**

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Jesus' very last words in Matthew's Gospel (28:20b)

*"And behold, **I am with you always**, until the end of the age."*

Jesus is present to us in the Eucharist!

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This series is called *The Greatest Gift: The Eucharist*.

God gives us many gifts.

- Crucifixion - "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).
- Eternal Life – "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day" (John 6:54).
- Forgiveness of venial sins

What makes the Eucharist the greatest gift?

All these things are included in the Eucharist!

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St Francis De Sales on the Eucharist

St. Francis De Sales describes the Eucharist as "**the very center point** of our Christian religion, **the heart** of all devotion, the soul of piety; that ineffable mystery that **embraces the whole depth of divine love**, by which God, giving himself really to us, conveys all his graces and favors to men with royal magnificence" (55, my emphasis).

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Which Comes First The Eucharist or the Church?

“Augustine, perhaps the most influential Christian theologian of all time, puts it this way: Jesus didn’t leave us the church and from the church we derive the Eucharist; rather, for him, Jesus left us the Eucharist and from the Eucharist we derive the church. The church is in service of the Eucharist, not vice versa” (Rolheiser, 20).

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What is a Sacrament?

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What is a Sacrament?

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1131

“The Sacraments are ***efficacious signs*** of grace, ***instituted by Christ*** and ***entrusted to the Church***, by which divine life is ***dispensed*** to us.”

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What is a Sacrament? (cont’d)

Baltimore Catechism

“A sacrament is an ***outward sign*** ***instituted*** by Christ to give ***grace***.”

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What is a Sacrament? (cont'd)



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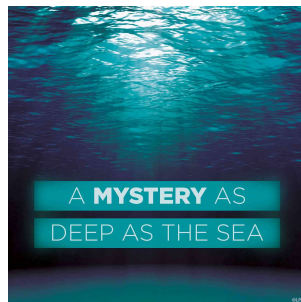
The Eucharistic Prayer: The Oblation

- From Fr. Rolheiser
 - “A gift, by definition, is something that is not deserved but given freely” (Rolheiser, 51).
 - Abraham sacrificing Isaac - “That is part of the essence of sacrifice: To properly receive anything, including life itself, requires that we recognize it precisely as gift, as something undeserved” (Rolheiser, 51).
 - Offering firstfruits of the harvest (Rolheiser, 52)

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What is a Sacrament?
(cont'd)

Sacraments involve
Mystery

(More later on
transubstantiation)

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Sacraments as Mystery

“The word *sacrament* also has its origins in the Greek term for “mystery,” *mysterion*. The sense of the term *mystery* is something unfathomable, something so extraordinary and overwhelming that we can never fully comprehend it. Sacraments are often called “sacred mysteries,” not in the sense of problems to be solved, but rather in terms of sacred realities to be immersed in and to be experienced again and again.” (Irwin, *The Sacraments*, 11, my emphasis)

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Sacraments as Mystery (cont'd)

"The celebration of the sacraments contains the church's agreed-upon and time-tested signs, symbols, gestures, words, and the context in which these are enacted, all of which comprise what sacraments are and do. Words will always fail to describe adequately and fully what sacraments are and do." (Irwin, *The Sacraments*, 2, my emphasis)

Jesus' exact words seven times

"Your faith has saved you."

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Didn't Catholics invent the Eucharist/Real Presence?

"You shall not add to what I command you nor subtract from it" (Deuteronomy 4:2b)

Early church fathers like St. Ignatius of Antioch spoke of the Eucharist as the Real Presence.

What does the Bible tell us about the Eucharist?

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Eucharist – Its Origin in the Bible

- The Last Supper was the first celebration of the Eucharist
- Luke 24:13-35 – The Road to Emmaus – Jesus was recognized in the breaking of the Bread
- The early church immediately started gathering to break bread - Acts 2:42-46

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Eucharist – Its Origin in the Bible New Testament

Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper with his words,

"this is my body...this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you."

Matthew 26:26-28

Mark 14:22-24

Luke 22:14-20

Cf. I Corinthians 11:23-25

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Eucharist – Its Origin in the Bible New Testament cont'd

And He told us to continue to celebrate it with his words,

“Do this in memory of me.”

(Def'n of Sacrament – “entrusted to the church”)

Luke 22:19
cf. I Corinthians 11:25

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Eucharist – Its Origin in the Bible New Testament cont'd

How come those who say we must take the Bible literally, say Jesus' discussion of the Bread of Heaven (John chapter 6) and Jesus' words instituting the Eucharist are only symbolic?

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Eucharist – Its Origin in the Bible New Testament cont'd

The Bread of Life Discourse – John chapter 6

“When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, “Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?” He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, “Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little [bit].” One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?” (John 6:5-9)

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Eucharist – Its Origin in the Bible New Testament cont'd

The Bread of Life Discourse – John chapter 6

- *“When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, “Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted.” So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat” (John 6:12-13).*
- *“Jesus answered them and said, “Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you” (John 6:26-27).*

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Eucharist – Its Origin in the Bible New Testament cont'd

The Bread of Life Discourse – John chapter 6

- “Jesus said to them, “**I am the bread of life**; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst” (John 6:35).
- “Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. 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?” (John 6:47-52).

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Eucharist – Its Origin in the Bible New Testament cont'd

The Bread of Life Discourse – John chapter 6

- “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**.” (John 6:53-55)
- “Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, **whoever eats this bread will live forever**.” (John 6:58b)

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Questions From Prior Evaluations

- “Protestants do not have the Eucharist, but they do celebrate the Lord’s supper IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIM. What good does that do for them? I have so many Protestant friends that do NOT believe in the Eucharist. What can I say (if anything). to help them? Many of these friends are cradle Catholics have left the Catholic Church and I am very concerned for their souls.”
- “Why do other faiths do communion only as a symbol - not the Real Presence...This is my body, this is my blood.?”

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The Eucharist and Real Presence

How can one hear these words and not believe in the Real Presence **instituted by Jesus**?

Yet that is what they do

- “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” (John 6:60b)
- “As a result of this, many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of the life and no longer accompanied him.” (John 6:66)

Peter’s Response?

- “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (John 6:68b) - **Mystery**

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It Sounds Like Cannibalism

“After saying, “What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?” (John 6:62) Jesus went on to declare, “It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail” (John 6:63). It is absolutely critical to interpret these two verses *together*, and not to isolate them from each other. When we do so, we immediately see that Jesus was not speaking about eating the dead flesh of his corpse (this would be cannibalism). Rather, he was speaking about eating the living flesh of his *resurrected* body, which would be raised to “life” by the power of “the Spirit” and then taken up to heaven in the ascension” (Pitre, 111).

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USCCB, The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church

“St. (Mother) Teresa of Calcutta reportedly once said: “When you look at the crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you then. When you look at the Sacred Host, you understand how much Jesus loves you now.” (paragraph 33).”

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“Homework”

- Reflect on your memory of your First Communion
- Can you begin to count how many times in your life you have received Communion?
- Do you have special memories of receiving Communion or time spent in Adoration?

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Resources for the Eucharistic Revival can be found at:

- Diocese of Rochester - <https://eucharisticrevival.dor.org/>
- USCCB - <https://www.eucharisticrevival.org/>

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Future Schedule

- Upcoming sessions - *The Greatest Gift: The Eucharist*
 - Thursdays
 - February 9th
 - March 9th
- When you exit this webinar a short evaluation questionnaire should come up to invite your feedback. Please note that unless you include your name, the evaluations are anonymous.
- The slides for this presentation will be available online at <http://www.renewaloffaith.org/greatestgift>

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Resources

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Second Edition. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997.

St. Francis De Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life.* Ignatius Press: San Francisco/Augustine Institute: Greenwood, CO. 2015.

Irwin, Rev. Kevin W., *The Sacraments: Historical Foundations and Liturgical Theology.* Paulist Press: New York. 2016.

Pitre, Brant, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist.* Image: New York. 2016.

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Resources (cont'd)

Rolheiser, Ronald, *Our One Great Act of Fidelity: Waiting For Christ in the Eucharist.* New York: Image. 2011.

St. Joseph Edition of The New American Bible Revised Edition. New Jersey, Catholic Book Publishing Corp. 2010.

USCCB, *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal.* Washington, DC: USCCB. 2011.

USCCB, "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church." Accessed online 12/10/22 at <https://www.usccb.org/resources/mystery-eucharist-life-church-0>

USCCB, *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.* Washington, DC: USCCB, 2006.

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