

## The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Some of us remember a time when Catholics would think that as long as they arrived at Mass by the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, they met their Sunday obligation. The Church thinks about this differently now. Since 1963, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy has called us to a fuller participation in Mass. “The two parts...that go to make up the Mass, namely, the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist, are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship. Accordingly, this Council urges pastors that in their catechesis they insistently teach the faithful to take part in the entire Mass...” (CSL #56).

The **Liturgy of the Eucharist** is made up of two major parts: The **Eucharistic Prayer** and the **Communion Rite**. A small rite of preparation precedes the Eucharistic Prayer. The Church has arranged the entire celebration of the liturgy of the Eucharist in parts corresponding to the words and actions of Christ. “For Christ **took** the bread and the chalice and **gave thanks**; he **broke** the bread and **gave** it to his disciples saying, “Take, eat and drink: this is my Body; this is the cup of my Blood. Do this in memory of me” (GIRM #72).

- In the preparation of the gifts, only the bread and wine are brought to the altar table, that is, the same elements that Christ **took** into his hands. No other items, except money or food for the poor, are to be brought forward at this time.

- In the Eucharistic Prayer, **praise and thanks is given** to God for the whole work of salvation, and especially for the gift and sacrifice of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. The offerings of bread and wine, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. We, too, pray that we will be transformed into Christ’s Body and Blood for the life of the world.
- Through the **breaking** of the bread and through the **sharing** of Holy Communion, the people of God, though they are many, receive from the one bread, the Lord’s Body, and from the one cup, the Lord’s blood.

Take, give thanks, break and pour, eat and drink. This is what we all do at Mass as believers, baptized in Christ. This is also what we are called to do in the world. When we participate in the sacrifice of the Mass, we renew our call to mission. A liturgist puts it well, “...the sacrifice of the cross reveals and inaugurates the mission of God’s people to announce the good news in word and deed by giving of self for others.”

So our full, conscious and active participation in the Liturgy of the Eucharist brings us more deeply into the Body of Christ and therefore calls us to imitate the self-sacrificing mission of Christ to the world.