

Sacrament of Initiation

Eucharist – Holy Communion

In the celebration of Eucharist, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

In the early church, the hallmark of being a Christian was to gather with other believers on the Lord's Day to celebrate the Breaking of the Bread. It is the same today: we gather as a community on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist.

The Mass is central to the life of the Catholic Church. The Mass has two parts of equal importance:

1. The Liturgy of the Word which consists of readings, the homily and the prayer of the faithful.
2. The Liturgy of the Eucharist in which we do as Christ commanded us at the last Supper.

At Mass we are nourished by the word of God and by the Body and Blood of Christ.

The purpose of the Mass is to give thanks and praise to God for the greatest gift of all, the gift of our salvation through the death of God's son on the cross.

When we celebrate Mass, we hear the story of our faith – the story of Jesus – so that we will not forget it. Our story is told in the readings from scripture, in the homily, in the words of the Creed and in the Eucharistic Prayer which always includes the words and actions of Christ at supper with his disciples on the night before his suffering and death. As we hear again of these past events, the Holy Spirit brings them into the present so that we become part of the story and participate in it.

When we listen to the Word of God we hear what it is that God demands of us today and how Jesus has shown us the way. We are called to commit ourselves to God's vision by living out what we have heard in our daily lives.

In the celebration of Eucharist, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Those who share the Body and Blood of Christ at the Lord's table become the body of Christ that is sent out to bring the love of Christ to others.

The word communion comes from the Greek *koinonia* meaning fellowship or sharing. When we receive communion at Mass, we are brought into closer relationship with one another as well as with Christ. Receiving the Body of Christ at Mass calls us to live what we receive and believe, to show that Christ is present in our world through all that we do and say.