

Holy Communion

Q. 250. What is Holy Communion?

Holy Communion is the Eucharistic meal of the Body and Blood of Christ, which: (1) reminds us of the Last Supper, (2) celebrates our unity with one another in Christ, and (3) is a foretaste of the eternal Messianic Banquet of heaven.

1. Holy Communion is the Eucharistic meal of the Body and Blood of Christ, which reminds us of the Last Supper.

In the Sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus Christ offers Himself together with us to His Father as He did on the Cross, by giving Himself, the Bread of Life, to us as nourishment for our souls. We are nourished with the Victim of the Sacrifice of the Cross, because at this sacrificial meal we recall what happened at the Last Supper and actually partake of the Body and Blood of the Victim of our Redemption. Thus St. Paul reminds the people: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16).

2. Holy Communion is the Eucharistic meal of the Body and Blood of Christ, which celebrates our unity with one another in Christ.

The whole Jesus is in Holy Communion. He, the God-man, is this Sacrificial Meal.

The Communion of the Mass is the meal of consecrated bread which nourishes us with the life of God and unites us to Jesus and to one another. By drawing us to a deeper union with Jesus, our Father draws us closer to each other. The Eucharist is both an expression of the unity and love which binds us to each other and to Jesus, and an action through which the bonds are strengthened.

3. Holy Communion is the Eucharistic meal of the Body and Blood of Christ, which is a foretaste of the eternal Messianic Banquet of heaven.

Holy Communion already gives us a part in the eternal banquet of Christ in heaven because we receive the same Son of God made man Who will be united with us in a union of joy forever in heaven.

At the Last Supper, Jesus said, “I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29).

Jesus promised that we would some day enjoy His presence: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:54). In this way Jesus anticipates the Messianic Banquet of the Kingdom.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

The Eucharistic meal not only reminds us of the Church’s heavenly reunion with Christ, but prepares us to take part in that heavenly communion with Christ and His Father.



Sacred Scripture

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” *John 6:52-56*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1355 In the communion, preceded by the Lord’s prayer and the breaking of the bread, the faithful receive “the bread of heaven” and “the cup of salvation,” the body and blood of Christ who offered himself “for the life of the world”: Because this bread and wine have been made Eucharist (“eucharisted,” according to an ancient expression), “we call this food *Eucharist*, and no one may take part in it unless he believes that what we teach is true, has received baptism for the forgiveness of sins and new birth, and lives in keeping with what Christ taught.”⁷²

Vatican Council II

Really sharing in the body of the Lord in the breaking of the eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another. “Because the bread is one, we, though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17). In this way all of us are made members of his body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:27), “but severally members one of another” (Romans 12:4). *The Church*,⁷

The more perfect form of participation in the Mass whereby the faithful, after the priest’s communion, receive the Lord’s body from the same sacrifice, is warmly recommended. *Sacred Liturgy*, 55

Summary Prayer

Jesus, after the miracle of the loaves, the people desired more material bread and expected You to work a miracle greater than that of the manna that fell from heaven, in order to nourish them. But You declared instead

that You Yourself are the true Bread of Life in the Holy Eucharist. You told the multitudes not to “labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you” (John 6:27).

Jesus, we believe in Your teaching that the Holy Eucharist really unites us to You, for You are present in this sacrament with your Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine. You spoke of the Holy Eucharist as a sacrament and as a sacrifice, and You prescribed the eating of It as a condition for eternal life. You said, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me” (John 6:56-57). Strengthen our faith in this divine mystery, which is the greatest gift of Your Sacred Heart to us.

We believe that Holy Communion has the power to sustain the life of our souls, even as food sustains the life of our bodies. The greatest blessing that Holy Communion gives us is an increase of sanctifying grace, the very life of our souls. It makes us share in Your own divine life; but we also receive actual graces— helps from above — to preserve Your divine life in our souls. Through these helps which You give us at Holy Communion and in times of need, our minds receive the light to see, and our wills the strength to avoid what is wrong. Thus, Holy Communion is a divine medicine whereby our souls are preserved from infection by the deadly poison of sin, for It imparts to us strength to keep us free from sin and to withstand the force of temptation. We thank You for the abundance of grace which You impart to our souls in each Holy Communion.

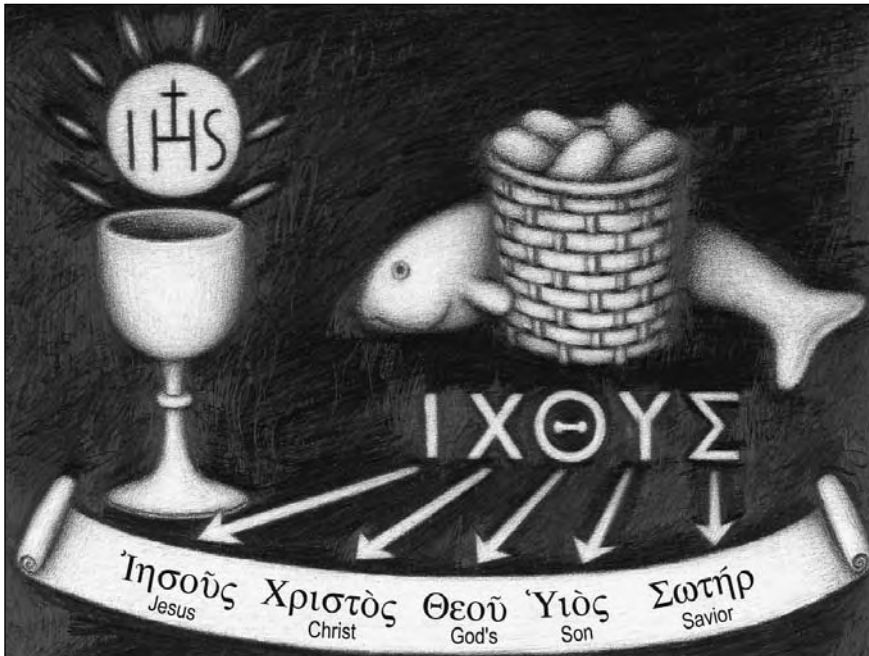
Jesus, You are the true and eternal High Priest Who established the unending Sacrifice of the Mass. You offered Yourself as a Victim for our deliverance and taught us to make this offering in Your memory. As we eat Your Body, which You gave for us, we grow in strength. As we drink Your Blood, which You poured out for us, we are washed clean. We thank You for the gift of the Eucharist which You give to us at Mass in Holy Communion. May You be praised and glorified forever and ever. Amen.

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. Holy Communion is the Eucharistic meal of the Body and Blood of Christ, which already gives us a part in the banquet of Christ in the Kingdom of heaven. How does Holy Communion accomplish this?
2. Ask your family members to prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit: “How can I help Jesus, whom I receive in Holy Communion, to make my heart like His and thus to make my family more loving and Christlike?”
3. Jesus said, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:54). What is Jesus telling you in this passage? Why should His words inspire you to receive Holy Communion more frequently and with greater devotion?

Catechism by Diagram

#E4-38



Symbol of Jesus. The fish signifies Jesus Christ because the letters of the Greek word Ichthus, which means fish, are the initials which spell out in Greek: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. During the persecution of the Church, Christians identified themselves by outlining a fish to signify Jesus. The basket represents the five loaves of bread of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, after which Jesus promised the Eucharist. The cup represents wine, the second species of the sacrament. These signify that the consecrated bread and wine are the living Jesus in the Eucharist (host and chalice).

Q. 251. Why is the Holy Eucharist a sacrament of unity?

The Holy Eucharist is a sacrament of unity because it unites the faithful more closely with Jesus and with one another.

By receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord in the Holy Eucharist, we are taken up into a close union with Him and with one another. In this sacrament, the unity of all those who believe in Jesus is not only shown but is also accomplished. This is what St. Paul meant when he wrote, “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17).

As our Lord draws us to Himself, He brings us closer to one another. As Israel’s sacrificial meals united them as a nation, so the Eucharist unites us as God’s family, making the Church one. Thus, the Holy Eucharist, when received in faith and in the state of grace, brings about gradual changes within the hearts of Christ’s faithful. It transforms us and makes us more like Christ, Who dwells in us.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Since the Eucharist makes us one in Christ, it strengthens our love and respect for one another. Having been nourished by the Lord Himself, we should, with an active love, strive to eliminate all prejudices and obstacles to brotherly cooperation with others. We eat It in order to be able to sacrifice ourselves for our neighbor's good. As the Eucharist inspires us with the memory of Christ's Passion and death, when He offered His Body and Blood for our salvation, so, when we eat this Bread of Life, we, too, will be able to practice charity.

#E4_4-8



Catechism of the Catholic Church

1396 *The unity of the Mystical Body: the Eucharist makes the Church.* Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body—the Church. Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body.¹ The Eucharist fulfills this call: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”² “If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond “Amen” (“yes, it is true!”) and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, “the Body of Christ” and respond “Amen.” Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your *Amen* may be true.”³

Vatican Council II

They [Bishops] should therefore see to it that the faithful know and live the paschal mystery more deeply through the Eucharist, forming one closely-knit body, united by the charity of Christ. *Bishops, 15*

In the sacrament of the eucharistic bread, the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 10:17), 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 towards whom our whole life is directed. *The Church, 3*

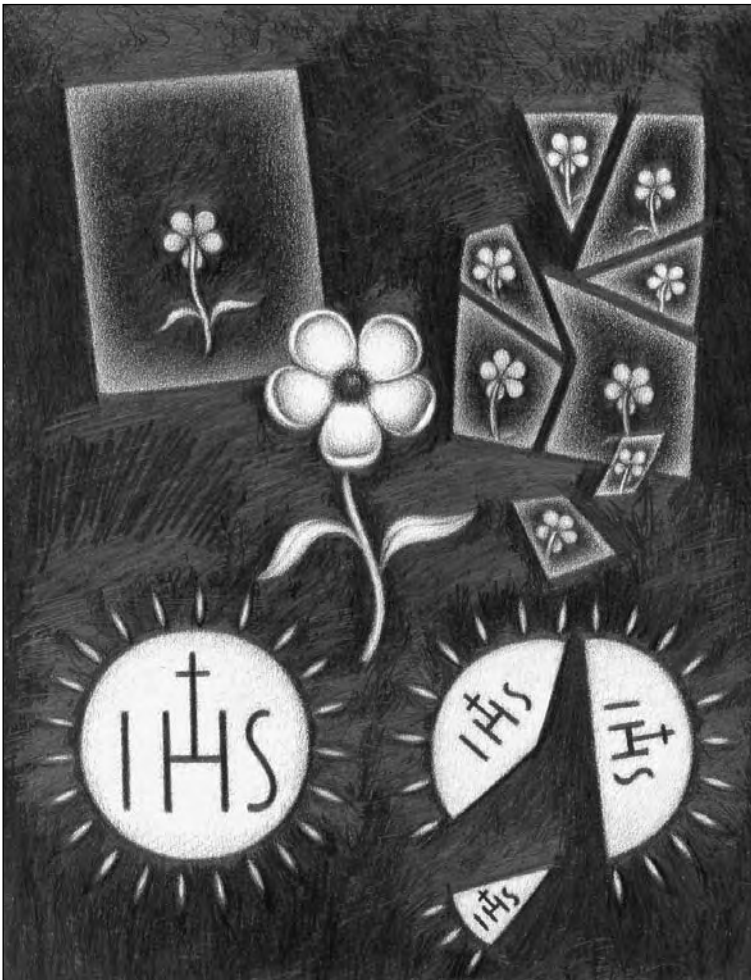
Summary Prayer

Jesus, we believe that the Eucharist is a sacrament of unity because it unites us more closely with God and with one another. Through this holy sacrament, we are united most intimately to You, and with the help of Your grace, we can love our neighbors.

Almighty Father, You renew us at Your Table with the Bread of Life, that we may grow in unity within the Body of Your Son. May the bread and cup we offer bring Your Church the unity and peace they signify. You give us the Body and Blood of Your Son in the Eucharist as a sign that, even now, we share Your life. May we come to possess it completely in the Kingdom where You live for ever and ever. Amen.

Catechism by Diagram

#E4-42



The Whole Christ in Each Part. A flower is reproduced completely in a mirror and also in each broken fragment of the same mirror. Jesus (IHS symbol) is present, whole and entire, in every part of every Sacred Host and in every drop of consecrated wine. If a Sacred Host is divided, Jesus is entirely present in each of the divided parts.



Q. 252. What does Jesus do for properly prepared Catholics in the Eucharist?

In the Eucharist, Jesus nourishes properly prepared Catholics with His Body and Blood, the Bread of Life, so that they may become more pleasing to God and may be strengthened in their love of God and neighbor.

In the Eucharist we become more pleasing to God. In this great celebration of our faith, we relive the experience of Jesus and thank our Father for it. We recall what our Father has given us. We receive the same gift of Jesus Christ and so enter more deeply into union with Him in the Holy Spirit. At Mass, the Catholic community both acts out its faith and is renewed and strengthened in all its members. By participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we become a people who are acceptable to God.

In the Eucharist we become strengthened in our love of God and neighbor. Holy Communion helps us to love God and neighbor more, because divine grace is increased in our souls. Jesus came into this world to redeem us and to keep us from sin; He comes into our souls for the same purpose. He strengthens us through actual or sacramental graces which help us overcome temptation and avoid sinning against God and our neighbor. Only by His help can we succeed in living a life of true charity, and thus fulfill His greatest commandment.

To receive the Holy Eucharist worthily, the Catholic must be in the state of grace. St. Paul says, “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord”

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

(1 Corinthians 11:27). As long as we are in the state of grace, we can receive our Lord in Holy Communion, because His Body is the fruit of the Sacrifice, and for us, is the way to eternal life.

The best way to prepare our souls for union with Jesus in Holy Communion is to offer Him, and ourselves with Him, reverently to God the Father in the Sacrifice of the Mass. Confession is necessary before Holy Communion if we have mortal sins to confess. Even when there are only venial sins to confess, frequent Confession is encouraged for all those who wish to best dispose themselves to receive the graces God desires to bestow through the Holy Eucharist.

#E4_4-10



Catechism of the Catholic Church

1392 What material food produces in our bodily life, Holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ, a flesh “given life and giving life through the Holy Spirit,”¹ preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism. This growth in Christian life needs the nourishment of Eucharistic Communion, the bread for our pilgrimage until the moment of death, when it will be given to us as viaticum.

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

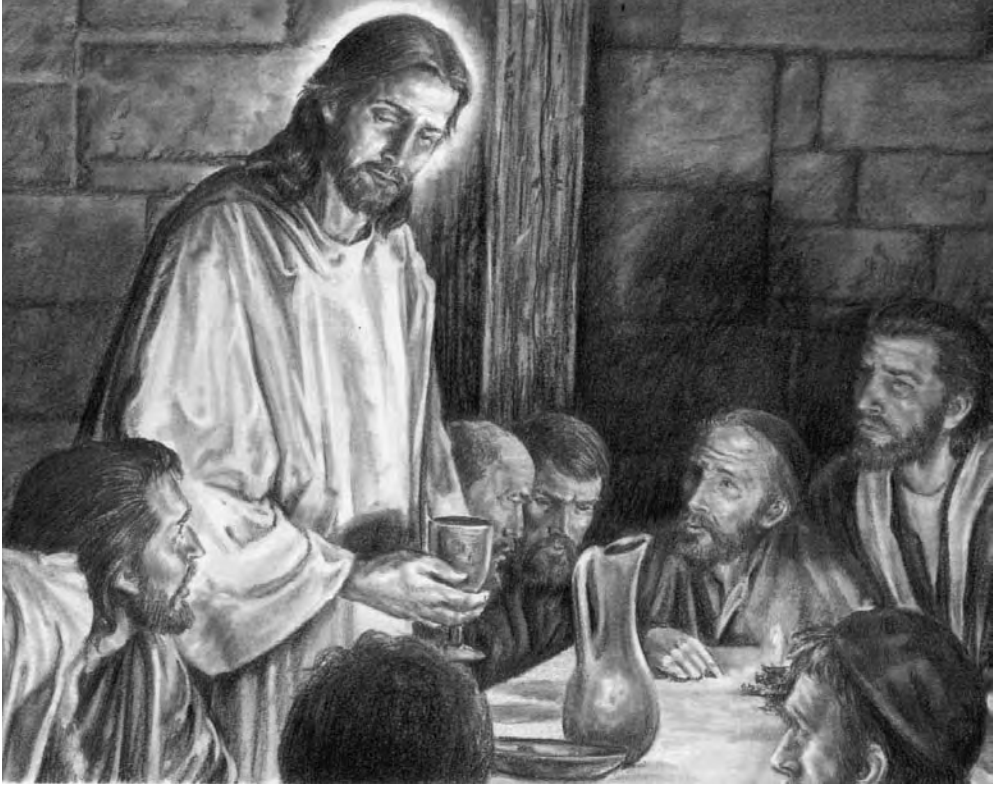
1. How does the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist unite Christians more closely with Christ and with one another?
2. How can you contribute to greater unity among your family members and the members of your parish community?
3. Using the prayer after question 251, ask the Holy Spirit to help you prepare yourself to receive Jesus more worthily in Holy Communion.

Catechism by Diagram

#E4-57



Christ, Our Source of Life in the Eucharist. Being Himself God, Jesus (monogram) is, in all things, the Father's equal (triangle). As man, He is above all the saints (heart) and angels, with supreme authority as King over all creatures. His saving work is continued in the Church through the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, in which He is our source of life. He is the Vine; we are the branches.



Chapter Summary Prayer

Lord, through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, You make us one family in Christ Your Son, one in the sharing of His Body and Blood, and one in the Communion of His Spirit. Help us to grow in love for one another and to come to the full maturity of the Body of Christ.

Your Word of Life gives us a new birth. May we receive it with open hearts, live it with joy, and express it in love. Let the Eucharist we share fill us with Your life.

May the love of Christ, which we celebrate at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, touch our lives and lead us to You, so that His high priestly prayer to You may be fulfilled: “That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21). We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 70

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 250. What is Holy Communion?

*Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 11;
On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 11, 12, 16;
On Evangelization in the Modern World, Paul VI, sect. 8;*

On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 62;
On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 4, 6, 11;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 20;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), *Vatican II*, sect. 10.

Q. 251. Why is the Holy Eucharist a sacrament of unity?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), *Vatican II*, sect. 3;
On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 17, 19, 21-24;
On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 62;
On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 5-6, 12;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 20;
On Social Concern, John Paul II, sect. 48;
Splendor of Truth, John Paul II, sect. 119.

Q. 252. What does Jesus do for properly prepared Catholics in the Eucharist?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), *Vatican II*, sect. 3;
On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 26;
On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 11, 12, 16, 17, 22;
On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 62;
On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 9, 11;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 20;
Splendor of Truth, John Paul II, sect. 102, 103.

#E4_4-4



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q. 250: Does everyone who receives Holy Communion receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ?
- Q. 251: May non-Catholics receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church? Why or why not?
- Q. 252: Upon receiving Holy Communion, how long does the Eucharistic Jesus remain in a communicant?