

Year of the Eucharist

Pope John Paul II has announced a **Year of the Eucharist** from Oct 2004 to Oct 2005. The Year of the Eucharist began with the International Eucharistic Congress in Mexico (Oct 10-17, 2004) and ends with the Synod of Bishops in Rome (Oct 2-29, 2005).

The theme is: 'The Eucharist - Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church'.



1. God's great gift

We are a Eucharistic people! Through our way of life we share in the divine life of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist we are entering into a profound prayer of *thanksgiving* which celebrates all that God has done for us, all that God calls us to be, and all that we stand for as a community of faith.

2. A gift of intimacy

The Eucharist is a gift of intimacy; it is God's way of being 'with' us and 'for' us. We remember that, in the womb of a Jewish girl, God took human flesh and entered the world in the person of Jesus. The Eucharist is about knowing God at the very core of our beings.

3. A gift of sacrifice

In the Eucharist, the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection is made present. The Lord's command to 'do this in memory of me' is an invitation to enter ever more deeply into relationship with God and God's people, dying and rising with Christ in our own lives.

4. A gift of unity

The Eucharist is inseparable from the community of faith. The Holy Spirit who transforms the bread and wine into the body of Christ transforms the community gathered into the body of Christ.

5. A gift of healing

The Eucharist answers the hungers of the human heart, and calls us to respond to the burdens of others.

6. A gift of presence

Prayerful contemplation of the Eucharist leads to an awareness of the presence of Christ in everyday life. In Eucharistic adoration we focus our attention on the One who is Life itself.

7. A gift with a responsibility

The Church calls us to approach the Eucharist responsibly: with humility, aware of our need for repentance and reconciliation.

8. A gift with a mission

The Eucharist commissions us to take the Good News to the whole world. All the Church's missionary works are sustained by an awareness that we are a Eucharistic people who feed from the Bread of Life.

9. A gift of eternal life

The Eucharist is the 'eternal banquet', the sign of promise that we will live with Christ forever. It is a celebration of the whole communion of saints, and anticipates the renewal of all creation.

10. A gift with a Marian dimension

The Church looks to Mary as a 'woman of the Eucharist'. Through the power of the Holy Spirit she brought forth the body of Jesus from her own body. In a certain sense, she became the first 'tabernacle'.

The Eucharist is an act of worship of the whole Church. It is our greatest prayer.

In the Eucharist we are transformed by the Holy Spirit and receive the presence of Christ through

- the community gathered,
- the action of the priest,
- God's Word proclaimed in the readings,
- the 'breaking of bread', and of course
- the communion host.

The Eucharist is a profound mystery. No statement can quite get to the bottom of it. The Church speaks of the Eucharist in a variety of ways, some of which are mentioned on this page.

In any given parish community there will be people appreciating and speaking of the Eucharistic mystery from a number of different perspectives. We can enjoy our own view and be enriched by the insights of others.

