

Bread for New Life

Reflections on the Eucharist



Fifty Bulletin Items



Bread for New Life Bulletin Kit
is based on the discussion program,
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Gift of love

that I may live within you

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The Eucharist is that mystery of faith at the heart of Christianity which has been described as 'the source and summit of the Christian life'. The Eucharist is a gift of intimacy; it is God's way of loving us, enlivening us, transforming us as one the body of Christ.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

Each time we enter into the celebration of the Eucharist we are entering into a profound prayer of *thanksgiving* which celebrates all God has done for us, all that God calls us to be, and all that we stand for as a community of faith.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

who declare our belief that 2000 years ago, in the womb of a Jewish girl, God took human flesh and entered the world in the person of Jesus. Why would God do this? Out of love. To love someone is to want to truly know that person, to be one with that person, to get 'inside' that person's experience of life and let him/her know that you understand, that he is not alone, that you are with her. This is what God did for us in the Incarnation. The Word took flesh so as to be one with humanity; to show us that we are not alone, that God is intimately 'inside' us, with us, present to us in all life's joys and heartaches.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

Through the Eucharist God shows us how much we are loved. From the mundane events of life, to the darkest hour of Calvary, to the joy of resurrection Jesus has shown us that there is no part of our human experience that cannot be touched, blessed, healed and transformed by the Divine Love.

Year of the Eucharist



St John described the gift of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, in very tangible terms: as something which we have heard, seen, watched, touched.

Read John's words in 1 John 1:1-14 and reflect for a few moments on the gift of salvation.

A eucharistic spirit in the home



Grace before meals

Catholics have a tradition of praying 'grace' before a family or household meal.

This is an important opportunity to stop and remember the blessings we receive from God, especially our food, the gift of one another and the faith we share. We also remember those who hunger for food, love and spiritual hope.

Make grace before meals part of your family or household routine. If it is already part of your practice, consider how you might bring fresh vitality to your experience of this prayer.

Year of the Eucharist



*The word
'eucharist' means
'thanksgiving'*



Gift of self-giving

on the night he was betrayed

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The Eucharistic celebration is the sacramental action through which the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection is made present.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

As a Church we speak of the sacrament of the Eucharist in terms of:

Thanksgiving: We give praise to the Father for redeeming us and calling us to share in the divine life.

Memorial: We remember Christ's sacrifice, not just as the recollection of the past, but as experienced in the present.

Presence: The same Christ who died and rose again is present today in his Church. This presence is brought about by the Holy Spirit. When we call upon the Spirit to transform the bread and wine, we are also praying for our own transformation as the body of Christ.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The Church gathers each Sunday, in the Lord's name, to be nourished by his body and blood.

We do so because we recognise that we are the descendents in faith of those earliest Christians; we too are people of the new covenant.

We do so because we recognise that, in loving his people to the end, Jesus was also sacrificing his life for us.

We do so because on the night before he went to his death, *Jesus asked this of us.* How contradictory it would be to call ourselves Christians and then to neglect his words: 'Do this in memory of me.'

Year of the Eucharist



The early Christians took the Lord's command to 'do this in memory of me' very seriously. The ritual 'breaking of the bread' became central to their way of life. As they drank from the 'cup of salvation' they recognised themselves to be the New Israel, the people of the new covenant.

Read about the early Christians in Acts 2:42-47.

A eucharistic spirit in the home



Family rituals

Family rituals are simple human acts which point to a deeper truth: the sharing of life and faith in the home. Family rituals are a way of passing on our faith. They also help us to understand why the Church has rituals.

What rituals do you have (or could you institute) in your household? e.g. Sunday morning pancakes after Mass. Trace the sign of the cross on your child's head as part of your 'good night' ritual. Pray the rosary on a long car journey. Make Christmas gift hampers for families in material need.

Year of the Eucharist

'Do this in memory of me'





Gift of unity

one bread, one body

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

We are the body of Christ. The Eucharist is inseparable from the community of faith. Through the Eucharist we are called to personal union with Christ. This union includes the call to be in relationship with the people of the Church.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The Eucharist is never a private matter between 'me and Jesus'. Jesus redeems us as a community and makes us part of his body. The Eucharist is always an action of the Church for the building up of the Church.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

To treat the Eucharist as a purely private action is a bit like attempting marriage without a spouse - it doesn't make sense. The Eucharist only makes sense in terms of the community of faith, the body of Christ. It is through his body that Jesus wants us to discover how deeply we are loved and how vital the mission to which we are called.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

By responding to Jesus' invitation to 'Take this and eat it', the Church, animated by the Holy Spirit, is built in the bond of unity. This is what we ask the Father in the Eucharistic Prayer (II) of the Mass: *May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit.*

Year of the Eucharist



The Eucharistic celebration is a plea to all the baptised to come together. It is a sign of our common commitment to seeking full communion and the fulfilment of Christ's prayer: Father, may they all be one (Jn 17:21).

A eucharistic spirit in the home



Make Sundays special

For Christians, Sunday - the Lord's Day - is the 'soul' of our week. It is our 'weekly Easter' when we refresh our inner spirit with prayer, rest and the rediscovery of God's gifts.

As a family or household, make Sunday a special, holy day. e.g. Take a walk in the sunshine. Enjoy a simple treat such as an ice-cream with your children. Take more time over Mass - get there a little earlier to pray, spend time with parishioners afterwards. Revisit a sacred site such as the grave of a loved one. Visit a person who is ill or in jail.

Year of the Eucharist



We are one body in Christ.



Gift of new life

the bread of life

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The Eucharist is the Bread that sustains us on our journey through life. We forget sometimes that the faith we received at Baptism needs to be constantly nourished, just as our bodies need to be regularly fed. Our faith tells us that Jesus in the Eucharist fulfils our deepest hunger and leads us to life's true meaning.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

We all know how difficult life can be. The very nature of the Eucharist speaks of suffering. It is the living memorial of Christ's passion and death, the love that loved to the very end. The elements of the bread and wine used for the Eucharist are made of ground wheat and crushed grapes. Each Eucharist invites us to join our sufferings to those of Christ. And each Eucharist compels us to go out to those who are suffering.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The Eucharist offers strength to all who shoulder life's burdens. It is the strength of the weak, support to the sick, the balm that heals wounds, and the viaticum (literally: 'food for the journey') for those leaving this world. It is the strength of those who witness to Jesus in environments hostile to the gospel message.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

Each Eucharist is a call to active participation in a communal way of life, to *be* the body of Christ - loving as Jesus loved, caring for one another and reaching out to touch the hungers of those beyond our community. In feeding one another we are fed.

Year of the Eucharist



The Eucharist calls us to share our resources - no matter how meagre - with one another.

Read the miracle of the loaves and fishes (Lk 9: 10-17) reflecting on Jesus' words to his disciples 'Give them something to eat yourselves.'

A eucharistic spirit in the home



Ways to give life

Two simple ways to give life as a family:

- 1. Affirmation.** Release one another from the burden of your criticism. Focus on all the good in your family. e.g. cut out negative jokes; smile more often; thank one another 'just because'.
- 2. Simplified lifestyle.** Pool your ideas and come up with ways to lead a less materialistic lifestyle. e.g. Cut back your shopping list, give non-material gifts, take inexpensive holidays. Give of your income to those in serious need.

Year of the Eucharist



*The Eucharist is
spiritual food for
our journey through
life.*



Gift of presence

faith leads to adoration

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

In the Mass the breaking of the bread is preceded by the 'breaking open of the Word'. Listening and responding to the Scripture readings arouses our faith in Christ, the living Word, and prepares us to receive him in the Bread of life. Thus we speak of the Mass as being made up of a twofold table or two liturgical parts: the liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic liturgy.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

As Catholics we believe that we find Jesus truly present in the Eucharistic bread and wine. We refer to this as a 'real' presence - not to suggest that other kinds of presence are not 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense; it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and human, is wholly and entirely present in the Eucharistic species which is consumed by the assembly gathered at the Eucharistic table.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

Eucharistic exposition and adoration has sometimes been described as 'sitting with the Lord' and 'exposing' our true selves to the Lord's presence. Thought of this way, such prayer rituals become a very intimate encounter with God. Furthermore, contemplating Jesus' presence in this way leads us to contemplate his presence in many other life experiences. Sitting patiently with a sick person, cradling a feverish child, holding a loved one, even waiting for the bus - Eucharistic adoration can help us to turn all such moments into precious opportunities to 'sit with the Lord' and treasure God's presence.

Year of the Eucharist



Without God's revelation, the Eucharist is incomprehensible. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, something must shift in our hearts in order for us to grasp the reality of the Lord's presence in the breaking of the bread.

Read the Emmaus story in Lk 24:13-35.

A eucharistic spirit in the home



Moments of
contemplation

Contemplation is not just for monks in monasteries. We can be 'contemplatives in everyday life' by allowing ourselves to be fully present to God's gifts.

Make a conscious effort to 'tune in' each day to the wonder of God's creation. This might be gazing upon a newborn baby, savouring the taste of nourishing food, admiring a scene of beauty, watering the garden, enjoying the gift of clean running water while taking a shower, stretching after vigorous exercise, pausing to notice the freshness of the morning air.

Year of the Eucharist



God is with us
always.



Gift & responsibility

Lord, I am not worthy

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The Eucharist is a gift which comes with a responsibility. When we gather at the Eucharistic table and receive the Body and Blood of Christ we are publicly declaring, through word and action, our commitment to Christ and our faithfulness to the Church's way of life. In other words, our reception of the Eucharist on Sundays is to reflect our lifestyle as a Eucharistic people Monday to Saturday.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

With the Eucharist comes a responsibility to be well prepared in a spirit of humility, repentance and gratitude before God's gift. This is why we have the penitential rite at the beginning of Mass and why we exchange the sign of peace before communion. It is an indication of our need and willingness to be reconciled. Likewise, before the Bread of life broken for us, we say with humble faith, 'Lord I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.' In cases of serious sin, the Church asks that we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before taking the Eucharist.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The act of receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist is a public statement; it acknowledges our communion with the Church. Where this communion has in some way been broken, it can be a more truthful statement to abstain from the Eucharistic act rather than to enter into it untruthfully. This is why, as a general rule, the Church does not permit interfaith communion. The division among the churches is a contradiction to Christian unity and needs healing before the churches can authentically enter into the Eucharistic rite which declares 'one body in Christ'. The process of healing this division is the path of ecumenism.

Year of the Eucharist



With the Eucharist comes a responsibility to be well prepared in a spirit of humility and repentance before God's gift.

Matthew's Gospel 5:23-24 tells us to go reconcile with our brother or sister before presenting our offering at the altar.

A eucharistic spirit in the home



Signs of peace

Our 'big' Church will only ever be as loving and forgiving as our 'little' churches, our homes.

In my family, with whom am I experiencing tension? What 'sign of peace' can I offer this person?

e.g. Use those powerful words: 'I'm sorry.' Be the first to forgive - let go of a long-standing grudge. Pray for a forgiving heart. Offer a practical gesture of compassion. Be willing to talk things through - 'no talkies' is the death knoll for a relationship. Don't let the sun go down on your anger.

Year of the Eucharist



'Let us offer one another a sign of peace.'



Gift with a mission

bread for the world

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The Eucharist commissions us to take the Good News to the whole world. The Eucharist is an extraordinary gift of new life. But it is not a gift to be kept to ourselves. Personally and communally, our reception of the Bread of life is a call to give life to others.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The Eucharist commissions us to take the Good News to the whole world. The most powerful way we do this is through the witness of our Christian way of life. The way we choose to live and work, spend our time and money, conduct our relationships, teach our children... all these daily realities are to be shaped by the fact that we are followers of Christ. We are meant to be 'different' to the society around us, and in this way cause people to ask questions of us and think more deeply about their own values and lifestyles.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

One of the ways we share our gift of faith is by openly speaking about it. This is all part of the Good News proclamation. It would be a strange contradiction if we were to consider ourselves Catholic Christians and yet never mention such matters to others.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The missionary commitment of the Church is powerfully summed up in the Eucharist. Every Mass concludes with the missionary command, 'Go', to bring everyone the announcement of the risen Lord and his peace. All the missionary works we do flow from and are sustained by our awareness that we are a Eucharistic people who feed from the Bread of life.

Year of the Eucharist



When we remember Christ's sacrifice at the Eucharist, we remember that he died for *all* people; in offering this gift of salvation no one is excluded.

Spend a moment praying for the Church's mission to the world.

A eucharistic spirit in the home



Hospitality

In the Middle Ages, whole towns grew up in order to satisfy the needs of pilgrims on their way to the great shrines.

Our earthly lives as Christians are a 'pilgrimage to the Father'.

How can our own homes be an oasis of support and encouragement to others on their faith journey through life?

Some suggestions: Invite a new parishioner to your next family meal. Greet visitors with warmth. Take time to listen and be truly present to those who visit your home. Pray with them.

Year of the Eucharist



*In the Eucharist we
are sent forth to be
bread for the world.*



Gift of promise

bread of eternal life

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

By filling us with every spiritual blessing and transforming us in the present, the Eucharist is an anticipation of God's kingdom that is to come. Whenever we gather as a Church at the Eucharistic table to remember the Lord's Passover, we turn our gaze to 'the heavenly banquet'. In prayer we call upon the spirit of the risen Jesus to come again in glory, to fulfil and complete all creation in his love: *'Maranatha!'*

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

The Christian life is often described as a journey. We are a pilgrim people, moving through history amidst great trials towards our heavenly home. As we make our way, the Eucharist is spiritual food, sustaining and renewing us as we live the Paschal mystery.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

When we celebrate the Eucharist we are aware of a twofold reality. We are aware of the presence of the risen Jesus in our midst; in a very real way, the kingdom of God is 'here and now'. On the other hand, the kingdom is 'not yet'; its fullness is in the future and we yearn and work for that day when Christ will come again in glory.

Year of the Eucharist



We are a Eucharistic People

During Mass, we pray with the saints of heaven and we remember those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. We believe that the saints of heaven are alive in Christ, rejoicing in God's glory, and bonded to us in love. The saints lift our sights and broaden our horizons, showing us the possibilities on earth because of the reality of heaven.

Year of the Eucharist



As a Eucharistic people we live in the hope of Christ's promise that he will come again in glory.

Like the early Christians, we pray: *Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!*

A eucharistic spirit in the home



Our special saints

As part of our Christian understanding of the communion of saints, we know that, through Christ, we are bonded to our loved ones even across the grave. In the Mass we pray for 'those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith...' In your own way, continue this prayer in your home. e.g.

Reminisce as a family: open a photo album, read a special letter. At mealtime, pray for your departed loved ones - may they embrace eternal life to the full! Release any unresolved hurts and regrets into the hands of Jesus.

Year of the Eucharist



Lord, your love is eternal.