Eucharist

THE NEW SHOFAR

"In an ever-changing world the Holy Eucharist is a constant reminder of the great reality of God's changeless love." – Saint Teresa of Avila

The Eucharist Is Central to Christian Prayer and Spiritual Life

In the Christian calendar, today used to be celebrated as the feast of **The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.** This feast originated in France in the mid-thirteenth century and was extended to the whole Church in 1264. This feast has been celebrated traditionally on the Sunday after Trinity Sunday. It invites us to focus on two manifestations of the Body of Christ: the Holy Eucharist and the Church. The primary purpose of this feast is to draw our attention to the Eucharist. The liturgy calls our hearts and minds to Jesus' suffering and death and our worship of Him. The two elements are important in that they highlight the living Body of Christ, the Real Presence of Christ in The Eucharist and the Church as the living Body of Christ. The secondary focus of this feast is upon the Body of Christ as it is present in the Church. The Church is called the Body of Christ because of the intimate communion which Jesus shares with his disciples. He expresses this in the gospels by using the metaphor of a body in which He is the head. This image helps keep in focus both the unity and the diversity of the Church.

The Biblical Foundation of the Eucharist

Jesus instituted the Eucharist during the Passover meal that he and his disciples shared before he was betrayed, also known as the Last Supper. Luke 22 describes how Jesus took the bread, gave thanks for it, broke it, and gave it to them. Jesus told them the bread was to remind them of his body being broken for them. They were to take the broken bread and consume it as a way of honouring his coming sacrifice. Then Jesus took the cup and told his disciples that the wine in it represented his shed blood. His blood was poured out for us, so we might be made clean. We are to drink the wine to remember his blood shed for us. This tradition of the Eucharist is rooted in the Old Testament Passover sacrifice of the lamb.

The blood covered the Jewish families so death would pass them over. Then, as the freed Israelites were released to the wilderness, God provided manna for nourishment. This foreshadowed Christ's body, which was sacrificed in our place as a provision so that humanity could have access to eternity with Christ. God uses these physical signs to communicate spiritual realities. The early church took Jesus' command seriously and gathered daily to break bread and observe communion. At the start of the church, the Eucharist was closely connected to prayer and worship. Sharing communion in our churches today remains a central way that we connect with other believers and with the Lord.

The Eucharist as a Prayer of Thanksgiving

Eucharist comes from the Greek word *eucharistia,* meaning thanksgiving. It is a prayer of thanksgiving offered to God. When we participate in communion, we remember Jesus' death on the cross and celebrate the gift of salvation. As we take the elements, our

gratitude deepens for Christ's amazing sacrifice on the cross. The physical act of eating the bread and drinking the wine moves believers from routine prayer to a worship-filled offering of prayer and praise to the Lord.

The Eucharist as Spiritual Nourishment

Jesus is the bread of life! John 6:35 "Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." The Eucharist reminds us that our needs are ultimately met by the Lord. It symbolizes spiritual nourishment from Christ.

Just as physical food sustains the body, spiritual practices such as the Eucharist sustain faith. They remind us that God is faithful and unchanging, especially during hardship and trials. We need these tangible practices to keep us rooted in Christ, as we easily forget what God has done for us. We grow closer to Christ when we are obedient to his call to remember and give thanks for our salvation.

The Eucharist Unites the Body of Christ

Communion is often accompanied by a shared meal, shared time in worship, and meditation on the Word of the Lord. It is not just a personal act of worship; it is a communal practice in which believers gather before God as one. 1 Corinthians 10:17 states, *Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf*. The Eucharist reminds Christians that we belong to a larger community. This shared practice binds us together as the body of Christ.

When we gather to observe the Eucharist, believers often share prayers for the church, the world, and those in need. We can broaden our personal prayers into intercessory prayers for others, lifting our community's needs together unto the Lord. We can encourage one another in Christ through the Eucharist.

The Eucharist Shapes Daily Spiritual Life

1 Corinthians 11:28 encourages, *Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.* We are invited to examine our hearts before participating in the Eucharist, as it is a holy act, an encounter with God. This holy pause leads to repentance and spiritual renewal. As we stand before God, we are confronted by his mind-boggling grace and are moved towards confession, gratitude, and worship. As we consider God's great love for us, we are inspired to live sacrificially towards others.

The Eucharist is more than a symbolic ritual; it's a sacred moment for believers to remember Christ's sacrifice for us. Our souls grow closer to the Lord and are nourished by the Holy Spirit. This shared moment of reflection unites us as the body of Christ. We see that the best is yet to come because God has made a way for us to share eternity with Him. This practice is central to our spiritual life. When we participate in the Eucharist, our faith grows, and we draw closer to the Lord. Today's feast is one to celebrate with great joy and a spirit of humble gratitude, that God, even in the face of our limitations and sins, continues to love us.