

God is here: the Eucharist

Do we live our belief that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist, present in our churches each day?

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June 2011



Jun 5: The Ascension of the Lord I am with you always

Jun 12: Pentecost
Receive the Holy Spirit

Jun 13: St Anthony of Padua

Jun 19: Holy Trinity
Three in One

Jun 21: St Aloysius Gonzaga

Jun 22: St Thomas More

Jun 24: Birth of St John the Baptist

Jun 26: Corpus Christi
Real Food Real Drink

Jun 27: St Cyril of Alexandria

Jun 29: Apostles Sts Peter and Paul

Jun 30: First Martyrs of the Church of Rome



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It was a school morning and I had lost my temper too many times in the rush to get out the door by 8.30. By the time we were walking up to the school gate the children were subdued and I was flustered and upset.

We made it right on the bell but it just hadn't been worth getting there on time. I was completely deflated. I wanted to start our days peacefully, not like this, feeling like the day was in ruins before it had hardly got started!

A small band of weekday morning Mass-goers was exiting the church, near the school gate. I watched them, suddenly realising that as they had just received the Eucharist, Jesus was literally passing by me.

They were so close to God. For a moment I felt an impulse to ask one of them for a blessing.

This month, the feast of Corpus Christi (June 26) gives us an opportunity to reflect anew on the real and living presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

In the Eucharist Jesus is present in body, soul and divinity under the form of bread and wine. The Catholic Church teaches that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the life and the mission of the Church.



Jesus himself said, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them." (*John 6:56*) And in the Eucharist he keeps his promise to be with us until the end of time. (*Matthew 28:20*)

Do we live our belief that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist, present in our churches each day? Do we come to Mass with a feeling of anticipation at meeting him again and offering him to God the Father as a perfect sacrifice of thanks and praise?

A Catholic friend tells me that she believes Jesus is in the Eucharist, but God's glory is in the sky and sea too, and why shouldn't she skip Mass for the beach some summer Sundays?

I think she misses the point. Think about it; wherever else he is, the bridegroom of our deepest heart, the one who loves us into life each day, is in the liturgy of the Eucharist specifically for us, and we don't go and meet him there?

But I need to tell myself this, too. For even when I am there at Mass each Sunday, and kneel before the tabernacle during the week, my mind and heart are not always in it, like the Pharisee whose cup looks clean from the outside but is really unfit to drink from.

How do we increase our sensitivity to Jesus' presence in the Eucharist? Can we make time for reading of the scriptures, commentaries and theology? Attend Eucharistic adoration or a Corpus Christi

procession? Visit the Blessed Sacrament during the day when our churches are quiet and largely empty?

The lovely thing about Catholic churches and chapels is that little flickering light which tells us that Jesus is there in the tabernacle, waiting for us to come and speak our hearts, or just say hello.



Not long after that farcical morning I decided to try to visit the Blessed Sacrament each day, just leaving home a little earlier in the afternoons for the school pick-up. At first I felt a bit self-conscious going into the church instead of heading over to where most of the early-arriving parents stand and chat.

However, I noticed one or two other school parents doing the same thing as me. And gradually, over weeks and months, the number of parents popping into the church in the afternoon is increasing. Why is that?

Perhaps our simple witness to God's presence in the church is prompting others to remember and seek him out there, as those Mass-goers' unspoken witness prompted me.

How else to be present to this mystery of the Eucharist? Perhaps by plumbing the depths of our own gratitude for all the good things we have in our lives. How terrible would it feel to be continually in a person's debt, getting deeper and deeper every day, with no way to repay or even to thank them?

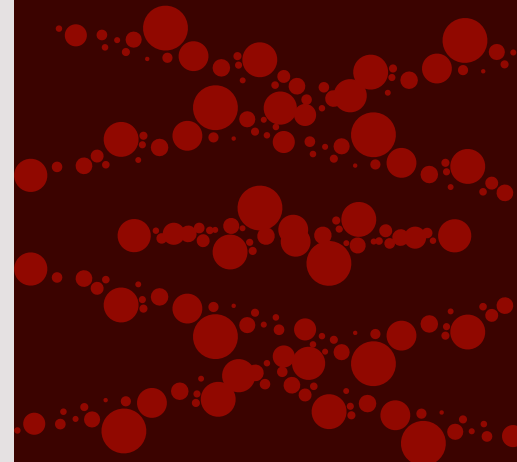





We are so indebted to God, and so grateful for the Father's blessings, and so utterly unable to give anything to God of value for he created everything! And anything we could give ends up breaking, corroding or disintegrating anyway. We ourselves are so capricious, we might give ourselves to God one day and take ourselves back the next.

But in the Eucharist we have the perfect offering of thanks – Jesus, the unblemished sacrifice – the only present we have to give to God, is one he gives to us, it is the fruit of his life, death and resurrection.

That is why the word 'Eucharist' comes from the Greek word 'Eucharisteo', which means 'give thanks'. We give to him ordinary bread and wine; he gives to us body and soul, when we receive his body and blood which gives us eternal life.





The Eucharist is also unifying; uniting us with God and with each other. God unifies us from the ground up. Our very matter, the cells that make up the bodies of every person born from the beginning until the end of time are all made up of the same stuff which is continually being recycled throughout the universe. Since Jesus' resurrection we are now also being made a creation of a new order, being nourished with his own body, soul and divinity.

Nourished by Jesus' Eucharistic presence, we leave Mass and go back to our homes, workplaces, and places of gathering as the living Body of Christ, to do his work in the world today. To make his Kingdom come on earth, as it is in heaven.

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“This should once more sink into our hearts: God is near. God knows us. God is waiting for us in Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Let us not leave him waiting in vain! Let us not, through distraction and lethargy, pass by the greatest and most important thing life offers us....And a second thing: let us never forget that Sunday is the Lord’s day...the Sunday fellowship with the Lord is not a burden, but a grace, a gift, which lights up the whole week, and we would be cheating ourselves if we withdrew from it.” From *God is Near Us, The Eucharist, the heart of life* by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.



Source: *The Eucharist, Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*,
www.vatican.va

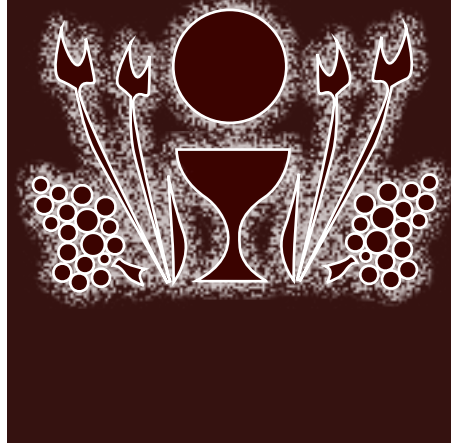
Article by Marilyn Rodrigues



Bleach Banner

Materials:

- Cotton fabric in a dark colour
- Bleach 100ml
- Water 100ml
- Spray bottle
- Light cardboard
- Scissors, pencil, sticky-tac



Instructions

1. Draw or trace the Eucharist template on to the cardboard. Cut out and position on banner to create your desired layout, fasten down with blu-tack as a temporary stabilizer.
2. Mix the bleach and water in the spray bottle. Lightly spray the fabric from 30 cm. Avoid contact with clothes.
3. Remove the template and allow to dry flat.

<< [Download Template here](#) >>

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At Table with the Lord

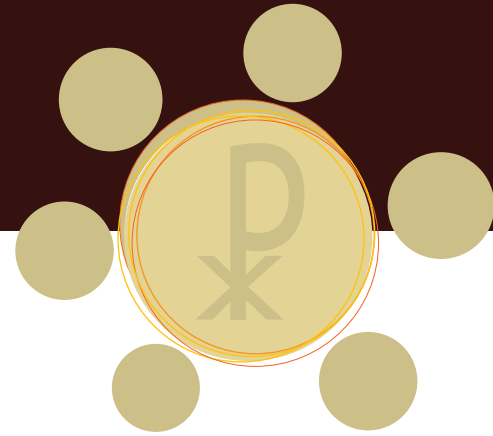
A family meal is more than just a feed. It's a time when we, as family members of whatever age or state of life, deepen our love for each other. We eat together not just to nourish our bodies, but to nourish our relationship as a family. We 'feed' each other by spending time together, listening to one another, praying 'thanks' for our blessings and sharing in the preparation of the meal.

A family meal doesn't have to be elaborate. It doesn't have to be perfect or done a certain way. It just has to be a sincere attempt to say: I love you, we belong, we believe.

Above all, family meals need to be a priority. Not just for families with young children, but for all of us. And not just on special occasions, but on the ordinary days as well.

Without prioritising, planning and effort, this precious part of our family life can easily be overrun by sports, work, hobbies, study, household chores, TV or computer games.

[Excerpt from "Family: A Feast of Love", The Story Source, Teresa Pirola]



'Grace before meals' is one of the simplest ways for a family to pray together. Usually it is a short prayer giving thanks for the meal. However, saying 'grace' does more than just thank God; it invites God to be present during your meal.



Family Meals Matter!

Studies show that family meals deliver a host of benefits to both children and parents. Most of these benefits are independent of ethnic background, socio-economic status and whether it is a one or two parent home.

Improves vocabulary and reading. Conversation around the family table teaches children more vocabulary and this advances reading.

Improves school grades. Having regular family meals was a strong predictor of academic achievement in several different studies.

Lowers risk-taking behaviours. Kids who have regular family meals are less likely to take drugs, feel depressed or have suicidal thoughts, smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, have sex at a young age or get into fights.

Improves family relationships. Children who have frequent family meals report better family communication, stronger family ties and a greater sense of identity and belonging. Many families use this time to catch up on each others' lives.

Improves diet. Family meals are associated with a lower intake of soft-drinks and snack foods and improved intakes of fruits, vegetables, grains, calcium-rich foods, protein, iron, fibre and Vitamins A, C, E, B6 and folate. Girls in these families exhibited fewer eating disorders or extreme diet behaviours. Consistent meals discourage snacking and model healthy eating habits.

Adapted from www.mealsmatter.org



Craft: Eucharist Stain Glass

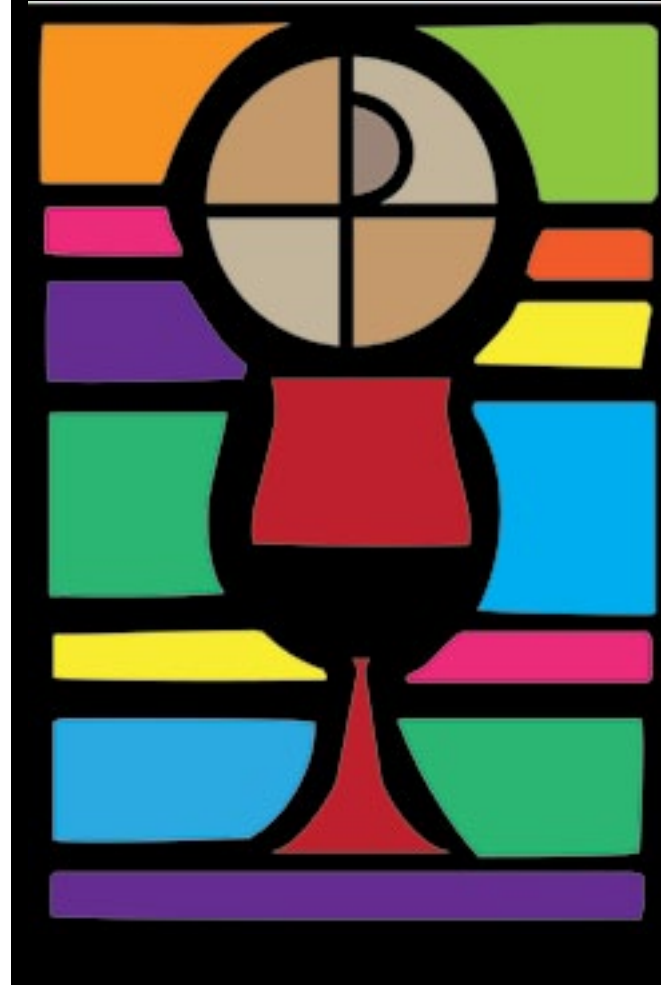
Materials:

- A4 Black Cardboard
- Cellophane or tissue paper in various colours
- Scissors, trimming knife, pencil, tape
- Template

Instructions

1. Draw or trace the reverse template onto the back side of the cardboard.
2. Carefully cut the shapes out using scissors and/or the knife
3. Cut the cellophane/tissue paper to fit and attach to the rear of the cardboard with sticky tape. Mount on a window or mirror.

<< [Download Template here](#) >>



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