

Session 5 Catechist Background

Session Outcomes

Informing the Mind

- Understand that through the power of the Holy Spirit and the words and actions of the priest, the bread and wine become Jesus' Body and Blood
- Connect the Liturgy of the Eucharist to the Last Supper and the heavenly banquet
- Learn the primary parts of the Eucharistic Prayer and the Communion Rite

Forming the Heart

- Acquire the practices necessary to prepare to receive the gift of the Eucharist
- Develop a disposition of wonder and awe in response to the gift of the Eucharist
- Increase the desire to receive the Eucharist
- Believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and its power to transform us

Church Documents

- *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 72, 78–89
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1352–1355, 1373–1377, 1382–1388

We Give Thanks and Receive

“Since the celebration of the Eucharist is the Paschal Banquet, it is desirable that in accordance with the Lord’s command his Body and Blood should be received as spiritual food by those of the faithful who are properly disposed.” General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 80

Gifts are seldom offered freely, without any expectations or conditions. I help my friend as long as that friend will return the favor one day. I give alms at church in the hope that God will recognize my gift. In each of these instances, we seek to give some part of ourselves away, but not everything. We hold on, hopeful that true love won’t cost us too much.

The doctrine of transubstantiation is the Church’s teaching that declares that God gives differently than we do. God gives us bread and wine from the Earth. He gives us the Church’s memory of what happened on the night Christ loved us to the end. And he gives the fullness of himself in the Eucharist. The Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation are not just symbols of what happened. The bread and the wine become Jesus himself.

Our confession that Christ is fully present in the Eucharist is an act of faith that requires us to give ourselves over entirely to that which we cannot sense. Christ gives himself to us fully.

One day, there will be something even more remarkable than this reception of his Body and Blood. Gathered around the banquet of the Lamb in eternity, we will no longer receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist. We will gaze in love upon the throne of the Lamb and see our glorified Savior himself. Each time we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we prepare ourselves for this ultimate moment of communion. Until then, our frequent reception of the Bread of Life and Cup of Salvation forms us to give ourselves away in total love.

➔ **Reflect** In your most important relationships, how can you change the way you give to be more like the way God gives? When do you feel the closest to Christ?



Lord, may these children come to know you as the source of all blessings, and receive you with an open heart.

Session Connections

Family Resources

My Family in Our Parish

Page 58 encourages participation in the liturgy through activities about the altar and the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass.

Session 5 **Family + Faith Pages** provide suggestions for family activities around strengthening relationships through feasts and celebrations, and preparing to receive Holy Communion.

Online Resources



sacraments.osv.com

- Adaptive Learning & Special Needs options
- ▶ Opening Video 5: explores our hunger for love and how Jesus nourishes our souls in the Eucharist
- Games that teach about the Liturgy of the Eucharist

Catholic Signs & Symbols

Wheat bread and grape wine are the essential signs of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Through the words of the priest and the action of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Bread and Wine



As the Child Understands

Children this age need very direct, concrete explanations of the concept of transubstantiation and why Jesus would offer himself to us as food. While children cannot grasp the fullness of these theological concepts, they can enter the mystery and accept in faith that which is sometimes more difficult for adults. It is important to give the authentic teaching of the Church in ways that are developmentally appropriate.

For example, one way to explain transubstantiation would be to say that God changes bread and wine so they become Jesus himself. It still looks and tastes like bread and wine, but it's really Jesus. We believe this is true because Jesus told us so.

It is important to avoid oversimplified explanations that distort what we believe about the Eucharist. We would never want to say that Jesus is "in the bread" or "in the wine." Rather, the bread and wine become his Body and Blood.

A Deeper Understanding

The Eucharist is so important to our lives as Catholics that we are *required to attend Sunday Mass*. The term *required* may seem demanding when in contrast we speak so often about God's *invitation*. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our communal life, but we often become distracted by things that are not a priority. We may be lured by the temptations of the world. But the Church teaches us that Mass and reception of the Eucharist are so necessary for our spiritual life that it is life-threatening to deny ourselves this gift. Jesus' Real Presence—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—is our source of life. We become what we receive, Saint Augustine said. Through the Eucharist, we are formed as the mystical Body of Christ.