

Liturgy and Life

At its heart, the Eucharist is a sacrament of communion, bringing us closer to God and to our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. If we live the fruits of the Eucharist in our daily lives, we will fill our families and our communities with the life-giving qualities that the Liturgy brings: hospitality, concern for the poor and vulnerable, self-offering and thanksgiving.

In the third edition of the *Roman Missal*, the bishops and translators have taken great care to ensure that the prayers accurately and fully reflect the mysteries of our faith. Thus, the words that we pray in each liturgical celebration will help to form and strengthen our understanding of the faith.

However, if the effects of the Liturgy stop at the doors of the church, we have not made our prayer and our faith part of our law of living. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) teaches that the Eucharist helps us to grow in union with Christ, avoid sin, increase in charity, strengthen communion with our brothers and sisters, and recognize Christ in the poorest and most vulnerable members of society (see CCC, nos. 1391-1397). But what does that mean in daily life?

Living a Life of Prayer

Our prayer lives should not be limited to a single hour on Sunday mornings. In fact, the richer our prayer lives are throughout the week, the more fully we will be able to enter into the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Here are some ways to make your daily life more prayerful:

- ◇ Try attending daily Mass at least once a week. Your parish may have an early morning Mass, or a church near your job may offer a lunchtime Mass.
- ◇ Stop in a church before or after work or on your lunch hour for fifteen minutes of quiet prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.
- ◇ Make it a practice to say grace before every meal— even if you are eating in the car.
- ◇ Schedule time for family prayer at least once a week. This prayer can be as simple as saying the Our Father or a decade of the Rosary together.
- ◇ Begin your day with a brief prayer of thanksgiving to God, offering your day to him and end your day with an examination of conscience, looking at your successes and failures in what you have done or what you have failed to do. If you are aware of serious sin, receive the Sacrament of Penance before you receive Holy Communion again.

Living a Life of Loving Service

Celebrating the Eucharistic Liturgy and receiving Holy Communion should strengthen us to conform our lives more closely to the example of Christ. As Jesus knelt before his Apos-

les to wash their feet (see Jn 13), giving them an example of humble service, so must we who bear the name Christian live our lives in service to our brothers and sisters. To help us in this endeavor, Church Tradition has identified works of mercy. These practices demand great sacrifice and generosity, but they also draw us more deeply into conformity with the Lord. Focusing on one of these works each week may be a practical way to integrate them into our personal, family, and parish lives.

Corporal Works of Mercy

- ◇ Feeding the hungry
- ◇ Sheltering the homeless
- ◇ Clothing the naked
- ◇ Visiting the sick
- ◇ Visiting the imprisoned

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- ◇ Converting sinners
- ◇ Instructing the ignorant
- ◇ Advising the doubtful
- ◇ Comforting the sorrowful
- ◇ Bearing wrongs patiently
- ◇ Forgiving injuries
- ◇ Praying for the living and dead

It all Comes Back to the Eucharist

Each Sunday, we return to the Eucharistic table, bringing all our efforts of the previous week, the good and the bad, the successes and the failures, the joys and the sorrows. We gather with our brothers and sisters in the Lord and, together with our priest, we join these efforts to the perfect sacrifice of Christ, asking that God will receive what we offer back to him in humble thanksgiving. Then, strengthened by Holy Communion, we are once again sent forth into the world to glorify the Lord in our lives. *[Based upon Roman Missal Formational Materials provided by the Secretariat for the Liturgy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010.]*