

FEAST OF FAITH

The
Transforming
Power
of the
Eucharist

**Marcellino
D'Ambrosio,
Ph.D.**

Workbook



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The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



by Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D

Abbreviations

Documents:

- CCC** *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997)
CF *The Christian Faith: The Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 7th ed. (2000)
DC *Dominicae Cenae*, John Paul II's Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist (1980)
EM *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, SCR (1967)
ID *Inestimabile Donum*, On Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, SCSDW (1980)
LG *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II (1965)
MF *Mysterium Fidei*, Paul VI's Encyclical Letter on the Holy Eucharist (1965)
RSV *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible, Catholic Edition
SC *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Vatican II (1962)

Vatican Congregations:

- SCDW** Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship
SCR Sacred Congregation of Rites (Split into the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 1969)
SCSDW Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship (created in 1975 when the SCDW and the Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments merged)



Other Resources by Marcellino D'Ambrosio

Books:

- Exploring the Catholic Church* (Servant Publications, 2001)
Guide to the Passion: 100 Questions about the Passion of the Christ (Ascension Press, 2004)

Selected Audio & Video Products:

- I Believe: A Four-Part Faith Formation Series on the Creed* (Luminous Media, 2004).
Getting More Out of the Mass (Luminous Media, 2004)
Early Church Fathers (Crossroads Initiative, 2003)
How Mary and the Rosary Can Change Your Life (Luminous Media, 2004)
The Virtues: The 7 Habits of Champions (EWTN Home Video)
Keeping your Kids Catholic. (Luminous Media, 2004)
The Passion: The Meaning of the Movie. (Crossroads Initiative, 2004)
Who Needs Confession? (Luminous Media, 2004)
Confirmation, Sacrament of Champions. (Luminous Media, 2004)
Straight Talk to Teens on Morality and Sex. (Luminous Media, 2004)

For a more complete and up-to-date listing of resources, visit www.luminousmedia.org or www.dritaly.com

For speaking engagements, email info@crossroadsinitiative.com or call 1-800-803-0118

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Introduction to the Feast of Faith Series

Everyone knows that being a good Catholic entails going to Mass each Sunday. All serious Christians strive to obey the third of the Ten Commandments, which is keep holy the Lord's Day. But few Christian churches feel the need to celebrate the Lord's Supper each Sunday. Many have communion only four times a year. And the understanding of what this "communion" really means varies enormously from one Christian faith tradition to another.

Recent studies have shown that, even among Catholics, there also exists a great degree of confusion over what the Eucharist is and to what degree it is important.

The Second Vatican Council – and indeed all of the popes of the 20th century – have worked tirelessly to clear up the confusion by providing teachings to help Catholics and non-Catholic Christians to not only understand the Eucharist better, but to derive much greater benefit from it.

In light of John Paul II's proclamation of a year of the Eucharist beginning in October 2004, I thought it appropriate to create some tools that would make the life-changing teaching of Scripture and Tradition accessible to Catholics and non-Catholics, to adults and teens, to the theologically literate and beginners alike. Hence the four-part faith formation series called the *Feast of Faith*. This study guide is meant to accompany the four talks that make up the series, available as videos or audios, which seek to address four questions that have been put to me again and again over the years:

- What does the Catholic Church mean when it calls the Mass a "sacrifice"?
- What does the Catholic Church believe about the "real presence"?
- How can busy, active people get more out of their experience of Mass despite internal distractions, mediocre music, and deficient preaching?
- Does Eucharistic adoration have any place in the post-Vatican II church?



Introduction to this Study Guide

To benefit from the *Feast of Faith* series, you'll need a set of the four talks on audio or video. They can be listened to or watched in a group setting or on your own.

These brief talks are chock full of insights that need to be mulled over, contemplated, and personally appropriated. This can be done in discussion with others, in personal prayer, and in further study.

This study guide is designed to facilitate this process for individuals, study groups, and religious education classes.

For each talk, this Study Guide provides the following:

- A **detailed outline** of the talk, complete with Scripture and *Catechism* references and space for participant to take notes.
- **Discussion questions** that have been carefully developed to provoke lively and fruitful conversation and deeper personal meditation.
- **Prayer** and **Action Points**—specific, practical suggestions to help you apply the truths presented in the talk to your everyday life.
- **Short Readings** for further meditation that have been drawn from the Church's rich tradition.

At the end of the Guide you will find:

- A collection of **selected readings** and **prayers** from the Catholic Tradition to deepen Eucharistic understanding and devotion.
- Suggestions for **further reading** on the Eucharist.

How Best to Use this Study Guide

Individuals:

Follow the printed talk outline as you listen or watch each talk. If you are listening while driving or performing some other activity, go over the outline before and after you listen. Make a few brief, personal notes in the space provided.

Then, for the next several days, select one discussion question to think about, and try to write down the answer to the question in the study guide. Select one of action points each day and consider how you can implement this in your life.

For the next several days after hearing the talk, slowly read and meditate on one of the short readings provided for you.

Working through the study guide in this way provides you with enough resources to spend four weeks growing in your relationship with your Eucharistic Lord. Visit www.dritaly.com for additional readings and application ideas.

For Study Groups and Religious Ed Classes:

This series is designed to be a four-week unit for RCIA/Adult Ed classes or as a day-long retreat for RCIA or as an in-service for catechists and Catholic school teachers.

A well-prepared discussion leader for each group is essential since too many discussion questions are provided to be covered in each session. A selection will have to be made in advance. My suggestion is to limit each discussion session to a maximum of three questions. Whichever format is chosen, each individual session could be structured in the same manner.

The following outline is based on a 60-minute session:

- Greeting and Opening Prayer 5 minutes
- Viewing/listening to the talk 20 minutes
- Group Discussion on 1 to 3 questions 15 minutes
(following the Study Guide)
- Personal Prayer and Journaling 10 minutes
(working through the Action Points)
- Closing group prayer 5 minutes
- Refreshments and fellowship following

Note: If you expand your study session to 90 minutes, choose more questions to discuss and increase your group discussion time from 15 to 40 minutes.

When done in the context of a day-long retreat or in-service, concluding with the celebration of the Eucharist would be ideal!

Conclusion:

The Eucharist is truly a feast! Yet many Catholics in the Western world look spiritually anemic. My prayer is that this Study Guide will help move the weekly experience of the Eucharist more and more in the direction of becoming a life-changing encounter with the Risen Lord. I am convinced that more effective assimilation of the rich nourishment provided in each and every Mass is the key to a more vital, energetic and effective Christianity.

– Marcellino D’Ambrosio, Ph.D.
CrossroadsInitiative.com

Sample



Talk 1: *The Eucharist as a Sacrifice*

Outline

I. General Introduction to the *Feast of Faith* Series

A. Sunday Mass is a hallmark of Catholic life

1. "Sunday obligation"—the Third Commandment (Exodus 20: 8)
2. It is the "source and summit" of our life (SC 10)
3. Protestants go to church on the Lord's Day, but many churches only celebrate the Lord's Supper four times a year. Why do Catholics believe it necessary to celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday?

B. Questions that many Catholics can't answer:

1. Why do we call the Mass "the Holy Sacrifice"?
2. How is Christ really present in the liturgy?
3. How can we get more out of the Mass?
4. Do Catholics really worship the Blessed Sacrament? If so, why?

II. Introduction to talk 1: The Idea of Sacrifice

A. Found in all traditional cultures

1. Basic religious sense: God has given us all that we have. We must give back to God our very best. So we deprive ourselves of something that is precious to us, withdraw it from our use, and give it to God in sacrifice.
2. Human Sacrifice
 - a. Human life is the most precious thing of all. Our children, in particular, are our most precious possession. Therefore many cultures offered human sacrifices to the gods, including the Phoenicians and the Aztecs



b. Genesis 22—the story of Abraham & Isaac on Mount Moriah. Demonstrates that God does not want human sacrifice.

3. Animal Sacrifices

a. After human life, animal life was most precious to the ancients. Animal sacrifice to God was a very costly gift. See the story of Cain and Abel, Genesis 4:1-16.

b. Animals substitute for us and our children (Genesis 22).

c. God commands animal sacrifices, though they were insufficient to atone for sins. They had to be repeated again and again.

d. They foreshadow the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

III. The Unique, Perfect Sacrifice of Christ

A. The sin of Adam and Eve; repeated by all of us since (Genesis 3:1-24)

1. Pride
2. Disobedience
3. Selfishness

B. Sin counterbalanced by the virtue of Christ

1. Jesus is the perfect Son
 - a. Perfect humility (Philippians 2:6-11)
 - b. Perfect obedience (Hebrews 5:8)
 - c. Perfect love (John 15:13)
2. Yet His commitment is never total or final until death.
 - a. He endures the most shameful, painful death imaginable: crucifixion
 - b. Torture unto death.
 - c. Jesus' sacrifice is "once and for all, perfect, all-sufficient"—Hebrews 10:11-14.

IV. The Mass as Jesus' Sacrifice (see CCC 1366-7)

- A. Protestant objection: we should not re-crucify Christ in the Mass
- B. Christ's sacrifice is not repeated in the Mass—it is re-presented
 - 1. It is "made present" again.
 - 2. Jesus is God. With God there is no time. The crucifixion and resurrection, though historical events, transcend history. As such, they have a timeless quality.
 - 3. In the Mass, we are at the foot of the cross and outside the empty tomb.
- C. Why is Jesus' Sacrifice (the Paschal Mystery) made present again in the Mass?
 - 1. So it can be applied to our wounds, our sins.
 - 2. So we can draw life from it, be nourished and transformed by it.

V. The Mass as Our Sacrifice (CCC 1368-72)

- A. Protestant objection
 - 1. Objection: If we say the Mass is our sacrifice, we turn it into a "work" by which we as sinful people seek to earn God's grace. It is a form of "works righteousness."
 - 2. Objection: We cannot "add" anything to the sacrifice of Jesus—this would deny the sufficiency of His sacrifice.
 - 3. Response: It is indeed Catholic teaching that we can't earn salvation by our works and sacrifices. Ephesians 2:8—"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God."
- B. Two ways that the Mass is our sacrifice as well as Christ's sacrifice
 - 1. Sacrifice of praise and thanks (CCC 1359-61)

FEAST OF FAITH:

A Four-Part Adult Faith Program on the Eucharist

By **Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D.**

In this enlightening, four-part adult faith formation series, Dr. D'Ambrosio takes you on a journey of discovery, offering profound reflections on the nature of the Holy Eucharist—the “source and summit” of the Catholic faith. Part one, *Sacrifice*, discusses how the Mass is a true sacrifice, the “re-presentation” of Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross.



In part two, *Real Presence*, the uniqueness of Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist is contrasted with the other ways He is present in the world. Our need to be properly prepared to receive Jesus in the Eucharist is discussed in part three, *Preparation*—we need to have more faith, more appetite, more repentance, and more forgiveness. Finally, part four, *Adoration*, offers practical ways we can grow in our devotion to the Holy Eucharist. This is a must-have series for RCIA and parish adult faith formation.



Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in historical theology from the Catholic University of America under the direction of Avery Cardinal Dulles. After eight years teaching at Loyola College and the University of Dallas, he left academia to direct the CrossroadsInitiative.com, a Catholic apostolate of evangelization and renewal.

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