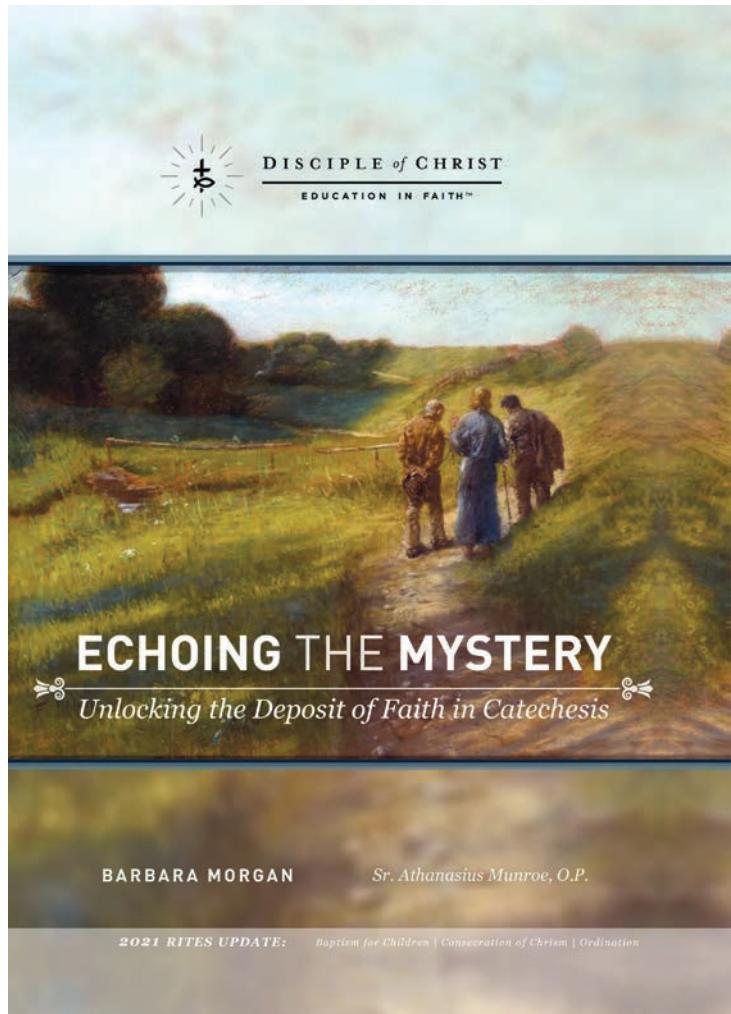

The excerpt below is from *Echoing the Mystery* *Unlocking the Deposit of Faith in Catechesis*, the most comprehensive manual for helping catechists analyze doctrine for catechesis.

The word “catechize” literally means “to echo down.” From the day of Pentecost on, the Church has faithfully echoed down the mystery entrusted to her by Christ. In order to transmit the mystery in all its glory, it must first echo fully in the heart of the catechist. The activity of catechesis starts with contemplation. This book intends to open a “fast track” for catechists to contemplate the mystery, as revealed in Scripture and described in the Catechism. Enriched by this systematic and evangelistic presentation of the Faith, catechists will be fully prepared to hand it on to others.

It is written by Barbara Morgan and Sr. Athanasius Munroe, O.P., and Sr. John Dominic Rasmussen, O.P., General Editor.



The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist



In order to give us “every blessing in the heavenly places,” Christ Jesus gave us Himself, the Blessing. This is “the source and summit of the Christian Life.” Already in the Holy Eucharist we have in veiled form what we will have face to face in heaven, God, our all in all.

Divine Perspective

In order to give us “every blessing in the heavenly places,” Christ Jesus gave us Himself, the Blessing. This is “the source and summit of the Christian Life.” Already in the Holy Eucharist we have in veiled form what we will have face to face in heaven, God, our all in all.

TRINITY

In the Eucharist, we already possess in veiled form the communion with the Trinity we hope to enjoy forever in heaven.



CHURCH

The Eucharist makes the Church. By receiving the Body of Christ, we become what we receive.

PASCHAL MYSTERY

In order to make His Paschal Mystery present in every age, Christ gave us the Eucharist on the night before He suffered and entered into His glory.

DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Christ, our incarnate Lord, loves us so much that He desires the deepest union with us. Through the Eucharist, He draws us into a union with Himself that is deeper than even the union between spouses. This union calls for an even deeper fidelity from us in return.

Theological Virtues (AIMS OF INSTRUCTION)

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is Food for the Journey in this life. Reflecting on it will certainly serve to stir our ardor to believe deeply, to hope fervently, and to love ardently.

The Church instructs her children by the signs of each Sacrament, teaching them the faith to be believed, the beatitude to be hoped for, and the charity to be practiced. These spring from the Mystery of Christ's life, into which the Sacrament immerses the believer.

Understanding this doctrine strengthens our **faith** because we see that Christ has not left us without contact with the saving realities He revealed. In the Eucharist, we say “Amen” to and receive all that the Church believes and holds sacred, and we enter into the greatest union with Him possible in this life.

Understanding this doctrine strengthens our **hope** since in this Sacrament we receive the pledge of future glory. Christ unites Himself to us, even now, because He cannot wait to be united with us forever in heaven.

Understanding this doctrine strengthens our **charity** because we grasp that receiving the gift of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ should drive out whatever is incompatible with Him who is Charity itself. It calls us to flee idolatry, (1 Cor 10:14-22), and commits us to the poor and to practicing a new way of behaving toward God.

This Sacrament commemorates the Last Supper and the Sacrifice of the Cross. It is also prefigured in the Old Testament by the sacrifice of the Lamb and the Passover meal of unleavened bread, which commemorated Israel's passage from slavery to freedom.

Scripture and Essentials

1) JESUS INSTITUTED THIS EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE FOR US “TO PERPETUATE THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS,” TO ENTRUST TO HIS BRIDE A MEMORIAL OF HIS LOVE IN THE PASCHAL “BANQUET IN WHICH (HE) IS CONSUMED.”



- * **Luke 22:19** - “Do this in remembrance of Me.”
- * **Rev 19:9** - Blessed are those invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb.

- * **1 Cor 10:16-17** - The Eucharist is our participation in the Body and Blood of Christ.

CCC 1323, 1328-1332

Scripture for further study

- The Eucharist is Jesus' offering of Himself—His life, His heart, His desire to be with us.
 - He reveals His desire for intimacy with us.
 - He gives us the opportunity to respond with thanksgiving and recollection of His wonderful works for us.
- In the Eucharist, Jesus has us sit with Him at the Last Paschal Supper and anticipates the banquet of the heavenly Jerusalem.
- By breaking the Bread, He makes us one with Himself, becoming one Body with Him.
- He takes us to the foot of the Cross with Mary and unites us to His sacrifice.
- He reveals His mysteries as He enters our hearts.
- He sends us out to bring in those who do not know Him and are not at His table.

- * *Acts 2:42 - The early Christians gathered for the breaking of the bread.*
- * *Heb 13:15 - Offer a continual sacrifice of praise through Christ.*

2) JESUS COMMANDED THE APOSTLES TO CELEBRATE THE EUCHARIST UNTIL HIS RETURN SO THAT WE WOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE IN HIS LOVE UNTIL HE COMES AGAIN.



- * **Jn 13: 1-7; 34-35** - Jesus loved His disciples to the end and gave them the example of His love.

- * **Phil 2:7** - Christ emptied Himself, taking human form, and became obedient to death.

CCC 1337, 1340, 1357, 1366, 1374, 1377

- The Eucharist is Christ's gift to His Bride. He gives us His life poured out for us and invites us to seek this gift as the pearl of great price.
- Jesus gives the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning when He turns it into the memorial of His “passing over” to the Father through His Death and Resurrection.
 - He celebrated the Last Supper, knowing it would lead to the Cross.
 - Receiving this Sacrament enables us to participate in His sacrifice—to be offered with Him and united to His death and His heavenly glory.

- The Eucharist truly is the same sacrifice as Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. The Eucharist
 - ◆ makes this sacrifice present,
 - ◆ is its memorial, and
 - ◆ applies its fruit.
- His presence in the Eucharist remains as long as the appearance of bread and wine remain.
 - His presence is whole and entire in even the smallest particle.
 - He unites us, rather than being Himself divided, when the Host is broken and distributed.

3) THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS IS ONE SINGLE SACRIFICE WITH THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE



* **Heb 9:14, 22** - The blood of Christ cleanses our consciences.

* **Rom 12:1** - Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God.

CCC 1109, 1367-1371, 2031

- "Sacrifice" indicates that which is offered and fully immolated.
- The Eucharist is the offering as that of Calvary, except that it is presented in an unbloody manner.

4) THE EUCHARIST UNIFIES THE CHURCH, THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST. THE SACRAMENT MAKES THE CHURCH.



* **2 Cor 13:13** - "All the saints greet you."

* **1 Cor 10:17** - The one bread makes us one.

CCC 950, 1331, 1396, 1397

- Every offering of the Eucharist is simultaneously the sacrifice of those participating at that time, of all those united to the Church, and of all those who have entered heavenly glory.
- The sacrifice is offered for the living and "for the faithful departed."
- The nature of the Church as Mystical Body is communion with God. By the gift of this Sacrament, she gives what she is, and becomes what she is more fully.
- The Eucharist commits us to the poor; how could we withhold material good from those with whom we share all spiritual good?

5) BY FAITH WE KNOW THE EUCHARIST IS THE TRUE BODY AND THE TRUE BLOOD OF CHRIST.



* **Jn 14:6** - Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

* **Jn 6:53** - "Unless you eat My Flesh and drink My Blood, you have no life."

* **Mt 8:8** - "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof."

CCC 381, 1384-1387, 1402-1405

- This truth is based on the authority of Jesus, who reveals, "This is my Body..."
- We must seek to increase our desire for and attention to this gift and to open our souls to grace.
 - Continual preparation and an examination of conscience should be part of our regular daily prayer life.
 - Immediate preparation could include an Act of Contrition, Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love, or any spontaneous or personal prayer.
- The Eucharist contains all—the Church's whole spiritual good. It is the "Sacred Banquet, in which:
 - Christ is received as food,
 - the memory of His Passion is renewed,
 - the soul is filled with grace
 - and a pledge of the life to come is given to us" - The Church looks forward to the life of the new heavens and the new earth in the Eucharist.

- *Jn 6:53 - "Unless you eat My Flesh and drink My Blood, you have no life."*
- *1 Cor 11:27-29 - The one who receives Communion should examine himself beforehand.*
- *Mt 8:8 - "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof."*
- *Eph 1:3 - God's plan is to unite all things in Christ.*
- *2 Pet. 3:13 - We wait for a new heavens and a new earth.*
- *Mt 26:29 - Jesus will drink the fruit of the vine in His Father's Kingdom.*

Related Doctrines

Since the Sacrament of the Eucharist is the "summit and source of the divine life," and since doctrines (teachings) feed our relationship with Jesus, the Eucharist is in its essence related to **all truths**.

Common Errors

1. "*Holy Communion is just a very beautiful ceremony in the Catholic Church.*" Holy Communion is so much more than just a ceremony. Ceremonies are symbolic, ritualized celebrations of human events. To receive Communion is to receive Christ Himself. Rather than simply being a fitting way to symbolize the unity of believers in Christ, the Rites prepare us to enter worthily into the deepest intimacy with Christ Himself.
2. "*The Eucharist is a good way to remember the Last Supper and that God loves us.*" The Eucharist is a memorial of Christ's Sacrifice, but rather than just turning our minds to a past act of God, it makes that act truly present in the here and now. The same God Who died for love of me is present on the altar and received by me in the Holy Eucharist.
3. "*Non-Catholics can receive Holy Communion.*" Saying "Amen" to the Body of Christ in Communion means saying "Amen" to the Body of Christ, the Church, with all that she is, believes, and teaches. For this reason, those outside of the Catholic Church may not receive Holy Communion.
4. "*You are always welcome to receive Holy Communion, regardless of any sins you have committed.*" Holy Communion must be received in a state of grace. Christ's love cleanses us of venial sin through Holy Communion, but, when in mortal sin, we must first be reconciled to God and restored to a life of grace through the Sacrament of Penance before we receive the Eucharist.

5. “*You may eat and drink freely before receiving Holy Communion.*” The Church asks her children to fast for an hour before receiving the Eucharist, in order to increase hunger for God and their awareness of the sacredness of this Sacrament. It is not an ordinary meal.
6. “*Receiving Holy Communion is cannibalism.*” We do receive Christ, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in Holy Communion. However, since Christ is received whole and entire by each and every person, we do not divide Him or “eat” Him in the grotesque sense. He makes the bread and wine a means of allowing us to receive Him.

Liturgical Sources

See appendix

Teaching through Beauty

HYMN: “*Pange Lingua Gloriosi*” by St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. Edmund Caswell (1876)

Sing, my tongue, the Savior’s glory,
of His flesh the mystery sing;
of the Blood, all price exceeding,
shed by our immortal King,
destined, for the world’s redemption,
from a noble womb to spring.

Of a pure and spotless Virgin
born for us on earth below,
He, as Man, with man conversing,
stayed, the seeds of truth to sow;
then He closed in solemn order
wondrously His life of woe.

On the night of that Last Supper,
seated with His chosen band,
He the Pascal victim eating,
first fulfills the Law’s command;
then as Food to His Apostles
gives Himself with His own hand.

Word-made-Flesh, the bread of nature
by His word to Flesh He turns;
wine into His Blood He changes;
what though sense no change discerns.
Only be the heart in earnest,
faith her lesson quickly learns.

Down in adoration falling,
Lo! the sacred Host we hail;
Lo! o’er ancient forms departing,
newer rites of grace prevail;
faith for all defects supplying,
where the feeble sense fail.

To the everlasting Father,
and the Son who reigns on high,
with the Holy Ghost proceeding
forth from Each eternally,
be salvation, honor, blessing,
might and endless majesty.
Amen. Alleluia.

ARTWORK: *The Allegory of the Eucharist*-Anonymous (1627)

The Eucharist is center in this painting. The Lamb and the seven seals reference the book of Revelation. The lower angels hold thuribles; a chalice and host unveiled by two cherubs adorn their centers. Wheat and grapes surrounded these angels, the earthly substances that are transformed into the Eucharist. Centered between them is a monogram of the name of Mary. From above, the Holy Spirit descends on the monstrance, bestowing His heavenly grace and making Christ truly present under the Eucharistic species. Roses embellish the monstrance, symbolizing our Lady. It presents Transubstantiation as a parallel to the moment of the Annunciation. The grace of the Holy Spirit transforms the earthly substances of bread and wine into the very Body and Blood of Christ, just as He once made the Son incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the source of His human nature. The left angel holds a burse; the right, the tabernacle key.



ARTWORK: *The Eucharist* by Nicolas Poussin (1647)

Poussin depicts the Last Supper, reminding us that it was then that Jesus gave the abiding gift of His Most Precious Body and Blood to His disciples.





Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come and I will dwell in the midst of you, says the Lord. And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall be My people; and I will dwell in the midst of you, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. And the Lord will inherit Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.

Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord; for He has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

Zechariah 2:10-13

