

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

The Early Christians were questioned and persecuted for their faith: You eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ. Are you cannibals?

A Christian answer: It is not human flesh we eat; it is bread and wine that is consecrated in commemoration of the Lord Jesus. We consume the body and blood of Christ in the species of bread and wine.

Jesus is firm in his teaching; he does not tone it down to suit the sensibilities of those who questioned him. He emphatically stated, 'If you **eat my flesh and drink my blood**, you will have eternal life'. Since then, the Church meets in the assembly to partake of the flesh and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.



We see, in this altarpiece, the early Church (the Apostles and Mary) meeting at a round table, at the centre of which is the Holy Eucharist.



This 15th-century icon by Russian painter Andrei Rublev could be interpreted as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit seated around a table, at the centre of which is the cup of sacrifice – of Christ's body and blood. At the front of the table is a space, inviting us to not only look but come and sit at the table and eat the body and blood of Christ.

The Holy Eucharist has three effects on anyone who participates in it:

1. Life in the Risen Christ – Eternal Life

We receive eternal life through the Eucharist. It is not something temporary that is eaten and disintegrated. Our moments of personal prayer could be forgotten, but Christ assures us that if we participate in the Eucharist just once—and even if that is the last time we participate in the Eucharist—we still receive the gift of eternal life. So, each one of us present here is gifted eternal life in the risen Christ because we receive him in the holy Eucharist. This eternal life is forever, for all time to come, for all eternity, even after the world and everything in it passes away. This is the first assurance given by Jesus about the Holy Eucharist.

2. Christ lives in me and I live in him

When we receive the Eucharist, Jesus begins to live within us. We do not meet him just for a passing moment. 'Jesus lives in me and I live in him' – this gives us great confidence in life, especially when we are faced with troubles and worries.

3. Living in relationship with God, the Father

Jesus said, 'The Father and I are one'. By this, he assures us that when we receive the Holy Eucharist, he will bring us into a new relationship with God the Father.

This is the faith that we confess. We pray that we receive the holy Eucharist with devotion, so that we may receive these three gifts that Jesus promises us.



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