

Fed by God

The Eucharist

In Scripture, God took pity on his people in their hunger.

As the Israelites journeyed through the desert, God fed them with manna from heaven. (Exodus 16) He fed Elijah with special bread that strengthened him to walk for forty days. (1 Kings 19:8) Twice, Jesus took pity on the great crowds who had gathered to hear him preach, and he miraculously fed them all from a few loaves of bread. He promised the crowds that he would give himself as the Bread of Life, giving his flesh as true food and his blood as true drink. (John 6:55)

As our bodies yearn for food, so our souls yearn for Jesus.

Without food, we grow weak and are unable to carry out our daily tasks. Without union with Jesus, we become spiritually weak and lack the strength to do all that he calls us to do. There are many ways that we can allow Jesus to nourish our soul, such as quiet times of prayer and reflection on his Word in Holy Scripture. But Jesus has also given us a very special gift, the Eucharist, by which we are nourished in both body and soul with Jesus himself.

Jesus gave us this gift of himself on the night before he died.

At the Last Supper, Jesus took a loaf of bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." He then took a cup of wine, gave thanks to God, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant." (Matthew 26:26-29) In a mysterious way, through what looked like normal bread and wine, Jesus was uniting himself with his disciples, in a way that connected them in both body and soul.

Receiving Holy Communion, we become one with Jesus.

When Catholics gather for worship, we believe that Jesus works a miracle. The Eucharist is not merely a symbol or a reminder of Jesus, but truly Jesus himself, hidden under the appearance of bread and wine. When we receive the Eucharist in Holy Communion, we are becoming one with Jesus in our entire being, in body and soul. And he is giving himself entirely to us, physically and spiritually, in his humanity and in his divinity.

The Eucharist is our most precious treasure as Christians.

It is because we believe that the Eucharist is truly Jesus, and not a symbol, that reception of Holy Communion is limited to those who share our faith and are properly prepared. Catholic children, for example, are typically prepared for Holy Communion at about age seven, when they are old enough to begin to comprehend that they will be truly receiving Jesus himself and not ordinary bread.

Through Holy Communion, Jesus nourishes us on our journey.

Just as God nourished the Israelites as they journeyed towards the Promised Land, Jesus strengthens us in Holy Communion on our earthly journey towards heaven.

What food does for the body, so the Eucharist does for the soul. Receiving Holy Communion with love, we are united intimately with Jesus, grow in our relationship with him, and receive grace to live a life of holiness and faith.

