

Marians of the Immaculate Conception and EWTN presents

The Divine Mercy Cenacle



LESSON EIGHT

Eucharistic

The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life. For the most Holy Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth: Christ himself, our Passover and Living Bread. Through his own flesh, made living and life-giving by the Holy Spirit, He offers life to human beings. Consequently the gaze of the Church is constantly turned to her Lord, present in the Sacrament of the Altar, in which she discovers the full manifestation of His boundless love." This Catholic understanding of the Eucharist, expressed in the above quote by John Paul II in his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (1), was adhered to faithfully by St. Faustina, a true daughter of the Church. She not only professed this truth of Jesus' Real Presence, but also lived it with great intensity as her love for the Lord was extraordinarily great. During her whole life, but especially after her final vows, when she united herself entirely to Jesus, St. Faustina's gaze never turned away from her Beloved. She manifested such a deep love for her Eucharistic Lord that she desired nothing else, but to receive Him daily in Holy Communion, to abide in Him, adore Him and to contemplate His attributes, especially His boundless mercy. She wished to indicate how important the Eucharist was for her even in the name she chose: Maria Faustina of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

It is absolutely astounding to see her preparation and longing for the reception of Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist. Her Diary offers many examples of this mystical union with the Lord. "Today in Holy Communion, I want to unite myself with Jesus as closely as possible, through love. I yearn for God so ardently that it seems to me that the moment will never come when the priest will give me Holy Communion. My soul falls as if into a swoon because of my longing for God." (1815*)

"When I received Him into my heart," St. Faustina writes, "the veil of faith was torn away. I saw Jesus who said to me, 'My daughter, your love compensates me for the coldness of many souls.' After these words, I was once again alone, but throughout the day I lived in an act of reparation." (1816). "At the moment when I receive God, all my being is steeped in Him. Amazement and admiration overwhelm me when I see God's great majesty, which stoops down to me who am misery itself. There bursts forth from my soul immense gratitude to Him for all the graces that He imparts to me." (1814).

The Lord expressed to St. Faustina His longing for a deep union with souls: "My great delight is to unite Myself with souls.... When I come to a human heart in Holy Communion, My hands are full of all kinds of graces which I want to give to the soul. But souls do not even pay any attention to Me; they leave Me to Myself and busy themselves with other things. Oh, how sad I am that souls do not recognize Love! They treat Me as a dead object" (1385).

Our Lord's complaint should serve as a reminder to us to always strive to receive Him with proper disposition, love and gratitude, and in a state of grace (i.e., being free from mortal sin). Otherwise, we place ourselves under God's judg-

ment, voiced by St. Paul: "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the Body and Blood of the Lord... For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the Body, eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Cor 11:27-29)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) speaks of the Eucharist as that "efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship people offer to Christ, and through Him, to the Father in the Holy Spirit (CCC 1325). It is the Eucharist, received worthily, that effects a profound communion between God and people and among all the faithful.

The *Catechism* also speaks of the Eucharistic Sacrifice as being, at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated (CCC 1382). John Paul II summarizes it thus: "The Sacrifice of Christ and the Sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice. It is the sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated down the ages. The Mass makes present the Sacrifice of the Cross; it does not add to that sacrifice, nor does it multiply it. What is repeated is the memorial celebration ...which makes Christ's one, definitive redemptive sacrifice always present in time (*Eucharistia de Ecclesia* (EE), 12)."

John Paul II adds further that the "Eucharist is truly a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth. It is a glorious ray of the heavenly Jerusalem which pierces the clouds of our history and lights up our journey". It is "the foretaste of the fullness of joy promised by Christ" and the "pledge of future glory (EE,18-19)."

1. How is the message of The Divine Mercy a Eucharistic message?

The Divine Mercy message is profoundly Eucharistic. This message unveils the inscrutable mystery of God's infinite love and mercy which He pours forth continuously on us through His only Son who offered Himself completely on our behalf. We receive this healing and redeeming gift of God's merciful love when we receive the Lord's Body which He gave up for us on the Cross, and His Blood which He shed for all for the forgiveness of sins.

The Eucharist, the living Body and Blood of the Lord, made present through the Eucharistic Sacrifice, was for St. Faustina her source of holiness, hope and strength. Just as blood carries oxygen and gives life to every cell in our body, the Eucharist is our spiritual food that nourishes and gives life to the soul.

During Eucharistic adoration the Lord gave St. Faustina a special grace to experience the events of the Upper Room on the night before He died. She recounts this experience thus: "During this hour of prayer, Jesus allowed me to enter the Cenacle, and I was a witness to what happened there. However, I was most deeply moved when, before the consecration, Jesus raised His eyes to heaven and entered into a mysterious conversation with His Father. It is only in eternity that we shall understand that moment. His eyes were like two flames; His face was radiant, white as snow; His whole personage full of majesty, His soul full of longing. At the moment of Consecration, love rested satiated - the sacrifice fully consummated. Now only the external ceremony of death will be carried out - external destruction; the essence [of it] is in the Cenacle. Never in my whole life had I understood this mystery so profoundly as during that hour of adoration. Oh, how ardently I desire that the whole world would come to know this unfathomable mystery!" (684).

The Eucharistic Apostles of the Divine Mercy wishing to underscore the closeness that exists between the Divine Mercy message and the Eucharist have placed in their logo the rays of Blood and Water emanating from the Host. The inspiration for this logo came from St. Faustina's vision. She wrote: "That same day, when I was in church waiting for confession, I saw the same rays issuing from the monstrance and spreading throughout the church. This lasted all through the service. After the Benediction, [the rays shone out] to both sides and returned again to the monstrance. Their appearance was bright and transparent like crystal. I asked Jesus that He deign to light the fire of His love in all souls that were cold. Beneath these rays a heart will grow warm even if it were like a block of ice; even if it were hard as a rock, it will crumble into dust" (370).

2. The importance of Consecration, participation in the Holy Mass and entering into a deep communion with God.

Christ died once for all, but at the moment of Consecration, we are mystically present at both, the Last Supper in the Cenacle when Jesus offers His Body and Blood for us and at the foot of the Cross where the Body was broken and His Blood shed for us. At the moment of Consecration, the Blood and Water, the streams of salvation are made present to reconcile, to heal, and to save us from our sins. Jesus' Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity are present, and where He is, there also is God the Father and the Holy Spirit with Our Lady and all the angels and saints.

Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist – according to the Catholic Catechism - is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to His Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (CCC, 2182).

God, who has made us in His image as persons, invites us to a personal relationship. God as a person desires to be in communion with us, as He loves us, is really interested in us, and is committed to us. As the Catechism teaches us: God's free initiative demands man's free response, for God has created man in His image by conferring on him, along with freedom, the power to know Him and love Him. The human soul is capable of entering freely into that communion of love. God touches and directly moves the heart of man, for there He has placed a longing for truth and goodness that only He can satisfy. The promises of "eternal life" respond, beyond all hope, to this desire. When we receive the Lord in Holy Communion we respond to the Lord's invitation to enter and remain in that deep personal union of love with God.

3. What is a Spiritual Communion and are graces received?

A Spiritual Communion is receiving Jesus in our heart because of a deep desire and intention to do so. Many times when we receive the Lord in Holy Communion we are insufficiently prepared, and our minds are distracted. As a child, St. Faustina could not go to weekly Mass because she had to share the only good dress with her sisters. However, she would make a Spiritual Communion and unite herself with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that there can be more graces received in a Spiritual Communion as the soul is more predisposed to receiving our Lord.

Longing to receive the Lord and uniting ourselves with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is a great way to enter into a Spiritual Communion with Jesus. We can prepare our hearts to receive the Lord spiritually by a prayer taught by the Angel to the children of Fatima:

My God I believe in you, I adore you, I hope in you and I love you. I beg pardon for those who do not believe, who do not adore, who do not hope and who do not love you.

We can also contemplate the Lord's presence after we have received Him in Holy Communion. Through contemplation, which is a special gift that God gives us when we long to love Him more, to adore Him and remain in Him, God conforms us into the image of Christ and to His likeness (cf. CCC, 2713).

4. How can we stay more focused and receive Him more worthily?

As humans, it is impossible for us to stay focused all the time, but we certainly strive to be more attentive. We should always as Our Lady to help us. As Mother of the Eucharistic Lord, she will assist us. Imagine what it must have been like for Our Lady to receive Jesus in Holy Communion from the Apostles! She received her Son, Jesus — the One she carried in her womb and the One whom she held in her arms after He was taken down from the Cross.

5. What does the miracle of Lanciano tell us about Divine Mercy?

In this Eucharistic miracle from the eighth century, the Host turned to human flesh and the wine to blood clots. Even today, the Host and Blood have characteristics of living tissue. Amazingly, the Host is human heart tissue! Longinus, the centurion that pierced Our Lord's Heart with the lance, was from Lanciano. And the gushing forth of Blood and Water over Longinus and all of humanity is an act of God's mercy. The message of Divine Mercy is a message of the heart. It calls us to a conversion of the heart and a deeper trust in God.

6. How important is frequent reception?

Jesus said to St. Faustina and to all of us: "Oh, how painful it is to Me that souls so seldom unite themselves to Me in Holy Communion. I wait for souls, and they are indifferent toward Me. I love them tenderly and sincerely, and they distrust Me. I want to lavish My graces on them, and they do not want to accept them" (1447).

* References without a source listed with the number are taken from the *Dairy of Saint Maria Faustina*.



Marians of the Immaculate Conception

To learn more about The Divine Mercy message and devotion, the Marians of the Immaculate Conception, and Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy visit us online at www.thedivinemercy.org or call 1-800-462-7426.