O Sacrament Most Holy, O Sacrament Divine:
Teaching about the Most Holy Eucharist

Outline Composed by James F. Gontis

(Please see #’s 1322-1419 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC).

O Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I adore Thee profoundly. I offer Thee the most precious Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference by which He is offended. By the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg the conversion of poor sinners.

- Prayer of the angel at Fatima as he prostrated himself before the Blessed Sacrament, which was suspended in the air at the time.

I. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.
   A. The Holy Eucharist is the greatest gift that we can receive in this life because it is God Himself, in the flesh whom we receive.
   B. Source – Fount from which all grace and mercy flow
   C. Summit – High point – All other sacraments and all the works of the Church are oriented toward the Holy Eucharist

II. Some essential teaching points
   A. The Holy Eucharist is the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine.
   B. The Eucharist is not a mere symbol. It is really Jesus, true God and true man that we receive in His entirety. *In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist “the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.”* CCC 1374
   C. When we receive the Holy Eucharist we receive the crucified and risen Jesus.
   D. The Holy Eucharist is not the body and blood of Jesus with bread and wine. Rather the Eucharist is the body and blood of Jesus under the appearances of bread and wine.
   E. When the priest says the words of consecration over the bread and wine, i.e. “This is my body…,” This is my blood…,” the bread and wine are converted into Christ’s body, blood, soul and divinity, so that they are no longer bread and wine, but the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ.
F. In the Eucharist, Christ’s one saving sacrifice that took place on Calvary is truly made present sacramentally. Jesus is not sacrificed repeatedly. Rather, we participate in His one, saving sacrifice.

G. At Mass, we are united with God and with His Church, including all of those in heaven.

H. The first Eucharist/Mass took place at the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday. This is when the Eucharist was instituted and this is also when Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Thus, the apostles were the first ordained (by our Lord) priests and bishops. Only a priest, (all bishops are also priests), can confect the Eucharist.

I. The Eucharist is celebrated with the same fundamental structure everywhere in the Church and remains the center of the Church’s life.

J. In the Eucharist, the Church presents to God the Father the offering of His Son – Through Him, with Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever. Amen. We should unite our lives and our very selves with Jesus in this offering to the Father.

K. Jesus is present in many ways to His Church: (CCC 1373)
   1. In His word
   2. In His Church’s prayer
   3. Where two or three are gathered in His name, cf. Mt. 18:20
   4. In the poor, the sick, the imprisoned
   5. In the sacraments of which he is the author
   6. In the sacrifice of the Mass
   7. In the person of the minister

***BUT HE IS PRESENT MOST ESPECIALLY IN THE EUCHARISTIC SPECIES!!!

L. Only priests and bishops act “in persona Christi,” that is, “in the person of Christ,” and thus, only they have the power, given them by Christ Himself, to celebrate Mass and confect the Eucharist. Important to teach children that only priests and bishops can change bread and wine into Jesus’ body and blood. Catechetical note: Learning this crucial information, may also have the wonderful effect of helping to ignite priestly vocations.
M. Teach that if God can create heaven and earth out of nothing, then He can certainly change bread into His body and wine into His blood.

N. Encourage those being instructed to express faith and reverence in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist by teaching the following:

- Genuflecting toward the tabernacle when they enter or leave church. We do this because Jesus is present there, body, blood, soul, and divinity.
- Bow of the head before receiving Holy Communion.
- Folding hands when approaching to receive Holy Communion. Remember, the Mass is THE PRAYER OF PRAYERS, THE HIGHEST ACT OF WORSHIP.
- Uniting ourselves with Jesus’ sacrifice for the salvation of souls.
- That we may receive Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand. People should be taught both ways!
- Offering their Holy Communion for intentions before Mass begins. This is a very important prayer.
- Offering to God all of their prayers, works, joys, and sufferings when they go to worship Him at Mass. Offering Him their very selves and asking Him to guide them and help them in every way, and especially asking Him to make them holy, to make them true witnesses to Him in the world, to make them saints!
- To prepare for Holy Communion the faithful are to observe the Eucharistic fast (one hour fast prior to Holy Communion. Note to catechists: Water and medicine do not break the Eucharistic fast.
- Also, our bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing, appropriate silence, etc.) ought to convey the solemnity of this moment when Christ becomes our guest.
- Stressing the importance of attending Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. It is grave matter if one misses Sunday Mass or Mass on a Holy Day of Obligation without a serious reason.

- Teach them that the Holy Eucharist may be received daily. It is our daily bread.

- Stressing the importance of being in a state of sanctifying grace when we receive Holy Communion! Teach them the importance of frequent sacramental Confession. Also, students should be taught that we must be in a state of grace when we die to enter heaven.

- Saying a prayer of thanksgiving at the end of Holy Mass. Nothing we can do in this life is as great as the Mass.

- Remembering that Jesus is truly present, Body and Blood in Holy Communion and that He loves us deeply. Let us love Him deeply as well and never take this great privilege of receiving Him for granted.

- Paying frequent visits to visit our Lord, truly and substantially present in our tabernacles, outside of Mass. These don’t necessarily have to be long visits. They can be very short visits to tell Him how much we love Him, how much we need Him, to express contrition for sins, to ask Him for His help, to thank Him, to adore Him, to listen to Him, or to just relax in His presence.

- Encourage those being instructed to participate in Eucharistic devotions, e.g. Eucharistic Holy Hours, 40 Hours devotions, Eucharistic processions, et al.

- Teach that we should ask Mary, the Mother of God to give us a deep love for her Son Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist.

O. It takes faith to believe in Christ’s Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist. See CCC 1381. However, Christ’s true presence in the Eucharist does not depend on any of our subjective beliefs.
Jesus is truly present when the Eucharist is validly consecrated, i.e. consecrated by a validly ordained priest.

**Point:** Even if a person were an atheist that does not make God any less real. God exists whether the atheist believes He does or not. However, whether one believes or not has tremendous impact on that person him or herself.

P. As long as we don’t overly complicate things, children generally accept the Real Presence very easily because they do not put up barriers. It is important when we teach children about the Eucharist that we first teach them that Jesus is God. If He is God, He can do all things! If He can make the whole world out of nothing, then it should not be hard to believe that He can take the appearances of bread and wine.

Q. The Mass is both and inseparably the perpetuation in time of Christ’s one sacrifice on the Cross, and the banquet of communion with His Body and Blood.

R. The Eucharist is both sacrifice and banquet. The altar is both the altar of sacrifice and the table of the Lord.

S. The Church warmly recommends that those who have the required dispositions receive Holy Communion when at Mass.

III. The fruits of Holy Communion

**A. Holy Communion strengthens our union with Jesus.**

1. The principle fruit of receiving Holy Communion is intimate union with Christ Jesus. Jesus himself said, *He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.* - Jn. 6:56. Life in Christ has its foundation in the Holy Eucharist.

2. Holy Communion preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism. What material food is to our bodily life, Holy Communion is to our spiritual life. To grow in the life of Christ, we need this Eucharistic food. It is food for our pilgrimage through life.

**B. Holy Communion separates us from sin.**

1. The Body and Blood of Jesus that we receive was given up for us for the forgiveness of sins. The Eucharist cleanses us from past sins and preserves us from future sins.

2. The Eucharist strengthens our charity and this living charity wipes away venial sins. Christ revives our love
and breaks disordered attachments to creatures and roots us in him.

3. The Eucharist preserves us from future mortal sins. The more we share in the life of Christ, the more difficult it is to break away from Him by mortal sin. The Eucharist is **not ordered** to the forgiveness of mortal sins – that comes in the sacrament of Penance. The Eucharist is the sacrament of those in full communion with the Church.

C. **The unity of the Mystical Body: the Eucharist makes the Church.**

   1. Since the Eucharist unites the faithful more closely to Christ, He unites the faithful in one body- the Church. Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens our incorporation into the Church that was first effected in Baptism.

D. **The Eucharist commits us to the poor.**

   1. Helps us to recognize Christ in the poorest, who are His brothers and sisters.

IV. **The Eucharist – “Pledge of the glory to come”**

   1. The Eucharist is an anticipation of heavenly glory.
   2. At the Last Supper, Jesus directed the apostles’ attention to the fulfillment of the Passover in the Kingdom of God. *I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.* –Mt. 26:29  In the Eucharist the Church anticipates the Second Coming of the Lord and prays “Maranatha.” “Come, Lord Jesus.” – Rev. 1:4
   3. Jesus comes even now in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, he is fully in our midst as true God and true man – however, His presence is veiled. When we celebrate the Eucharist we await in hope the coming of our Savior, when every tear will be wiped away. Then we shall see God as He is. We shall be like Him and praise Him.
   4. The Eucharist is the surest sign and pledge of the new heaven and the new earth. The Eucharist is “the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the
food that makes us live for ever in Jesus Christ.” CCC 1405

V. A few more notes
A. We should try to frequently get those who are being catechized in front of the Most Blessed Sacrament. For example, it would be a very good idea, if there is a First Communion Retreat, to have a period of Eucharistic Adoration. This will help instill a hunger in the children for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Let them gaze on Him Whom they will receive. Catechetical Note: You may wish to “bookmark” the following website: http://www.childrenofhope.org. – Website dedicated to Eucharistic Adoration for children.
B. Use proper vocabulary – DO NOT refer to the Holy Eucharist as the “bread and wine,” THE EUCHARIST IS NOT BREAD AND WINE!
C. THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST IS THE BODY, BLOOD, SOUL, AND DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST UNDER THE APPEARANCES OF BREAD AND WINE.
D. Teach children to remind themselves, as they are getting ready to receive Holy Communion, that it is Jesus, our Merciful God and Savior, true God and true man, Whom they are receiving.
E. Only those hymns should be used that reflect solid Catholic theology.
F. Read them Bible passages about the Holy Eucharist, e.g. Lk. 22:14-20, John. 6:48-58
G. Read Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church a lot on your own, especially when planning your lessons.
H. Introduce them to saints, especially young saints, e.g. St. Dominic Savio, who had a great love of the Holy Eucharist. There are some wonderful books on saints by Fr. Lovasik. Also, I highly recommend the Little Catechism on the Eucharist by Father Roberto Coggi, O.P., published by New Hope Publications. I think every catechist should have this book. The book has three sections: the basic doctrine on the Eucharist, Miracles of the Eucharist, and Saints and the Eucharist.
I. Catechists must be Eucharistic people. We cannot give what we do not possess.
J. Pray for your students that they will, throughout their lives, grow deeper and deeper in love with the Lord Jesus, truly and substantially present in the Most Holy Eucharist.