

**The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity and Peace**  
 Corpus Christi – Gn. 14:18-20/1 Cor 11:23-26/ Lk 9:11b-17  
 Ave Maria Catholic Church, June 19, 2022 - Fr. David M Vidal

Today, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. We can meditate on one aspect of this celebration, which is the Eucharist as the Sacrament of Unity and Peace.

To bring us to a greater understanding of these fruits of the Holy Eucharist, we can recall a text from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians. Here Saint Paul condemns the actions of the Corinthians for their lack of unity. St Paul says: *“I do not praise the fact that your meetings are doing more harm than good. First of all, I hear that when you meet as a church, there are divisions among you . . . When you meet in one place, then, it is not to eat the Lord’s supper, for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own supper, and one goes hungry while another gets drunk”* (See 1 Cor. 11: 17-22).

Saint Paul’s criticism and condemnation of those actions reveal some of the social divisions of the first century. In his letter to the Galatians, St Paul describes them: divisions between Greeks and Barbarians, Jews and Gentiles, and slaves and free men. Now, if we go deeper, we will recognize that those divisions have an origin, and their origin is sin. The act of sin disrupts harmony among men. If you see a lack of unity, search for the cause, and you will find that the cause is sin in one or more of its forms: pride, avarice, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, or sloth.

Now, the wound created by sin is so deep that no human power is sufficient to restore that lost harmony. For men it is impossible, but not for God. Only God can restore harmony and peace in our world. Only God can bring unity to our lives. And so, He does. God offers us unity and peace in Jesus Christ and through Him.

These are Jesus’s gifts to us: unity and peace: and He offers these gifts in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Unity and Peace.

### **The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity**

In his exhortation to the Corinthians, Saint Paul not only shows the Corinthians’ wrongdoing but also indicates the remedy that can restore goodness in their lives. Saint Paul says: *“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread”* (1 Cor 10:17). Saint Paul presents the Eucharist as the source of the Church's unity.

Later, St Cyprian echoes these words in the third century by saying: *“The sacrifice of the Lord highlights the unanimity of Christians strengthened by solid, indivisible love. For*

*when the Lord calls the bread formed of the union of many grains his Body, and when He calls the wine pressed from many clusters of grapes and poured together his Blood, in the same way, He indicates our flock formed of a multitude united together” (Ep. ad Magnum, 6).*

That is a most beautiful teaching, just as many grains of wheat form the bread and many grapes form the wine, we -even though many and diverse- are One Body in Christ.

### **The Eucharist: Sacrament of Peace**

The Eucharist is also the “Sacrament of Peace” in two ways: first, because it is the sacrament by which humanity is reconciled to God; second because it is the sacrament by which humanity is reconciled to one another.

### **Humanity is reconciled to God**

The peace offered by the Eucharist is the peace that bridges the separation that had been established between humanity and God. The original sin of Adam and Eve was the first injustice committed by humanity, the first act of violence against God’s love and God’s order. That action is the origin of all divisions in the history of humanity. As a result, the continual outpouring of personal sins creates a continual state of war.

How could peace be restored? For man, it is impossible, but not for God. God sent His Only Son, Jesus, the “Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6), and through his Cross, Jesus “made” peace between God and humanity, as Saint Paul tells us in (Col. 1:20). The Eucharist is the “*Sacrament of Peace*” because it is the “*Memorial of the Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross,*” As such, it is the ultimate and definitive act of forgiveness and reconciliation. From the Cross, Jesus says: “*Father, forgive them.*”

### **Humanity is reconciled with one another**

The Eucharist not only reconciles God and humanity but also extends and effects a reconciliation among people, a reconciliation with one another. We all gather around the Altar where the Sacrifice of Christ takes place, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the healthy and the sick, and people from many different cultures, languages, and races. This is not an exclusive gathering for some, but this is a Sacred Celebration that gathers us all in the act of Jesus, the ultimate peacemaker who tells us: “*Peace be with you!*”

Pope Benedict XVI said that the Eucharist is properly called “peace” because “*by introducing us into the same sphere of His love, by feeding us with the same Bread, [Jesus] also gives us to one another as brothers and sisters*” (Benedict XVI, *Heart of the Christian Life*, 117).

And Pope Benedict also said: *“Those who recognize Jesus in the Sacred Host, recognize Him in their suffering brother or sister, in those who hunger and thirst, who are strangers, naked, sick, or in prison; and they are attentive to every person, they work in practice for all who are in need”* (Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Solemn Mass of Corpus Christi*, 2005). For this reason, the Eucharist is the source of the Christian social vision, and it is the medicine against social injustice.

Today, as we struggle as a society in our search for unity and peace, let us lift our eyes to the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus is there! He is the Gift coming from the Father, and He brings us that unity and peace that we are longing for. Amen