

The Eucharist

1- Objectives

- ❖ To go into the depths of the Eucharist Sacrament to meet the Lord Jesus and understand His work of Salvation through sacrifice of His love.

2- References

- ❖ “Sacraments of Eucharist” H.G. Bishop Mettaous abbot of El Syrian Monastery

3- Scriptural Verse

- ❖ “Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said: Take, eat; this is My body. Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them: This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many” (Mark 14: 22- 23)
- ❖ “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6: 53-54)

4- Lesson Guidelines

- ❖ The Lord Jesus instituted the holy Eucharist on Covenant Thursday shortly before His arrest and trial. After He celebrated the Rite of Passover of the Jews, He washed the feet of His disciples, as a sign of repentance and preparation, then sat down and instituted the Passover of the New Covenant “Eucharist” (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-23, Luke 22: 17-20 and John 6: 47-51)
- ❖ It is a Holy Sacrament by which the believer eats the Holy Body and Precious Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, presented by the Bread and Wine.
- ❖ Known as: Sacrament of Holy Communion, Sacrament of Thanksgiving, The Lord’s Supper, The Mysterious Supper, and Sacrament of Community.
- ❖ This Sacrament has the greatest importance among the Seven Church Sacraments. It is sometimes called the ‘Mystery of Mysteries’ or the ‘Crown of Sacraments’; for all the Sacraments are crowned by the Eucharist. It is a must after Baptism and Confirmation; confession, Marriage (which used to take place between the Matins and Holy Mass according to the original Rite of Matrimony), unction of the sick and priesthood ordination.

Why is the Sacrament of the Eucharist so important?

- ❖ It is the mystery of being united with God through which the soul knows the Holy Trinity and loves Him, accepts Him and responds to His work.
- ❖ It is the mystery of thanksgiving by which we obtain the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ’s life. It is a heavenly meal that grants us eternal life.

Eucharist and Relationship with Passover, Salvation and Church

- ❖ It is the continuation and extension to the Cross’s work of salvation.

- ❖ It is the Sacrament of the New Testament and in it the covenant between God and man is achieved as the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, (Revelation 1:5).
- ❖ It is a symbol of real Passover as the Lord Jesus Christ was offered as the Lamb of God (Corinthians 5:7). The mystery of the Passover has been achieved in the Body of the Lord to enjoy eternity. Therefore, the sacrament of the Eucharist allows us to enter the kingdom of God to meet Him face to face forever.
- ❖ It is the church sacrifice, which the Lord Jesus Christ offers with all love and obedience to God. The church goes into the altar (the Golgotha), soars up to the highest heaven, and does not know what to offer except the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Through the Eucharist, we become members of the Lord Jesus Christ's Body, filled in Him and known to the Father on the altar through His beloved Son.

The Eucharist and the Word of God

- ❖ It is the flesh of the Word of God that fulfills the voice of God. It brings us into the depths of the Holy Bible to realize that the Word of God is the presence of the living God with all His power as a Creator, Judge and Savior.
- ❖ The Holy Bible is the main source of sanctioning the Sacrament of the Eucharist (Pauline, Catholicon, Praxis and Gospel).
- ❖ The Liturgical Eucharistic text is taken from the Holy Bible (1 Corinthians 2:9).
- ❖ The Bible reading and the Prayer of the Mass are performed to sanctify the soul and body, and provide spiritual and mental preparation for partaking of the Holy Communion, that is why we should come to church early and attend the readings. Attending the reading of the Bible is a church requirement for communion.
- ❖ Before and after receiving the Holy Communion, it is important for each person to read the "Prayer before and after Holy Communion", and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the wonderful grace received.
- ❖ It is advisable that the remainder of the day be spent reflecting, rather than mingling with others. Reading spiritual books and spending the day in peace is a great way to feel the existence of God inside you, after having received the Holy Communion.

The Eucharist Symbols in the Old Testament

- ❖ The Passover (Pascha).
- ❖ The heavenly Manna.
- ❖ The offering of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17-19).
- ❖ The wisdom meal (Proverbs 9:1).
- ❖ The Messiah's meal (Isaiah 55:1-3).
- ❖ The wedding meal (Songs of Songs).
- ❖ The prophecy of Malachi (Malachi 1:11).

Benefits of this Holy Sacrament

- ❖ Abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ according to His precious promise: “He who eats My Flesh, and drinks My Blood abides in Me, and I in him” (John 6:56) and becoming members of His Body, of His Flesh and of His Bones (Ephesians 5:30), and becoming partakers of the Divine Nature (2 Peter 1:4).
- ❖ It gives us the promise of eternal life: “Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day. He who eats this Bread will live forever” (John 6:54,58).
- ❖ It provides growth in the Spirit and spiritual perfection and life in Jesus Christ, for He said: “For My Flesh is food indeed and My Blood is drink indeed (John 6:55, 57). As food develops the body and keeps it healthy, so too the Holy Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, strengthens the soul so that it may grow continually in grace.
- ❖ It provides remedy to the soul, body and spirit, as we say in the Offertory Mystery: “That they (Holy Body and Precious Blood) may become to us all for participation and healing and salvation for our souls, bodies and our spirits”.
- ❖ As Communion received worthily and with preparation results in health and strength for our bodies and souls also partaking of the Communion without worthiness causes weakness, sickness and death (1 Corinthians 11:30).
- ❖ Communion results in our salvation and remission of sins; by Repentance and Confession we are granted the remission of the sins we have confessed, but in Communion we are granted remission of sins that we are unaware of. It is the washing and cleaning of the heart from all sins (Revelation 7:14).
- ❖ Communion gives the person immunity against sin. “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies” (Psalm 23:5).

Necessary Physical Purity for Communion

- ❖ Control over all physical senses so that no obscure sins may enter the heart.
- ❖ Cleanness of body and clothing; respectable clothes should be worn.
- ❖ The faithful must be fasting for 9 hours according to the number of hours of suffering of the Lord Christ during His Crucifixion, (from the Third Hour (9 am) until His sentence at the Twelfth Hour (6 pm) and eat light food on the eve of Communion. This rule applies if the liturgy will finish early morning. For example, if the liturgy finishes at 7 AM, we must fast from 10 PM on the night before. Otherwise, no matter when the liturgy finishes (even late afternoons), we must fast starting midnight to receive the holy communion as the first thing into our body.
- ❖ Women should not partake of the Holy Communion when they are menstruating or after giving birth until 40 days for boys or 80 days for girls.
- ❖ It is not preferable for a person to walk barefoot, or for a man to shave, directly after Communion. This is to avoid any wound occurring which may bleed.

5- Discussion Points

- ❖ Read the passage from St. John 6: 48 – 59 and discuss it clarifying how real is the Holy Body and Precious Blood. It is not a remembrance for the act or a teaching aid to know what happened that day but it is a true Body and a true Blood and a must for everlasting life.

6- Conclusion

- ❖ The Lord, with His great compassion towards mankind, has arranged for a continuation of His salvation through the sacrament of the Eucharist. It should be approached with the same eagerness as a patient seeking medicine to be cured of all illnesses.
- ❖ Our holy church fathers called Communion “the remedy for the death of sin”. The conditions necessary for receiving Holy Communion are: true faith, pure repentance, reconciliation with others, preparedness spiritually and physically, feeling contrite and unworthy at the time of Communion.

7- Activities / Workshop

- ❖ Put all the conditions to eat the Passover lamb from Exodus 12:1-11; and compare it to the readiness to have the Holy Communion then discuss the similarity and the spirituality of both.