



*Stewardship of The Gift of God  
at St. John the Evangelist Parish*

## **Week 9: The Eucharist creates and fosters communion among persons**

Dear Parishioners,

Last week, our reflection was on the essential relationship between the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Together we pondered the fact that *if you approach the Sacrament of the Eucharist free from serious sin, Jesus Christ can create and foster astonishing communion between you and the people who surround you.* This truth begins first within the parish. The communion we experience among our fellow parishioners—or the lack thereof—is directly related to how fully we allow him to live in us through the sacramental life of the Church. This is why our faith can never be the experience of just one individual.

Pope John Paul II reminded us:

“Christ gives us the gift of His body and blood to make us one body, one spirit in Him, to bring us more deeply into communion with him and with all the members of his body, the Church. Make the Sunday celebration in your parishes a real encounter with Jesus in the community of his followers!”

—Pope John Paul II, June 26, 1999

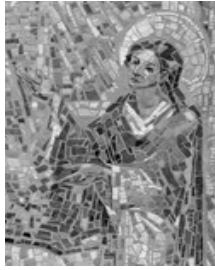
While it is tempting to think that it is our own effort that creates the good sense of community and hospitality here at St. John's parish, the full truth is that Christ in the Eucharist on Sunday is the one who makes that offering through those in whom he lives. Stewardship as a way of life recognizes that the gift of Jesus Christ among us is *the gift* that creates, sustains and deepens our communion with one another.

Msgr. Barry Knestout  
& the Stewardship Committee

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## St. John's Parish Formation in the Eucharist

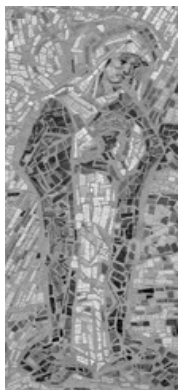
### Week 9: The Eucharist Creates and Fosters Communion



#### The Community of the Church

The gospel message produced a fraternal community. Jesus brought believers together in the community known as his Church. As the proclamation of God's word led to conversions and Baptisms, the group grew and took on its own distinctive shape and style. In a brief but effective summary, St. Luke described the life of the earliest Christian community: "They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the Apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people." (Acts 2:4-47).

Let us focus our attention, first of all, on one particular feature characterizing the Christian community. Notice their communion in the



"breaking of the bread." Notice that "breaking bread in their homes they partook of food with glad and generous hearts." The reference is certainly to a Jewish meal in its typical form, but it is not without a veiled reference to the Eucharist. Indeed the expression was gradually taking on that meaning in the language and practice of Jesus' disciples. Later on in the Acts of the Apostles, as in Paul's letters, the expression will

appear again to indicate the rite of the Eucharist. At this time, the rite was still associated with a common meal; but it would then take on its own distinctive shape and purpose, which had been willed by the Lord at the Last Supper and entrusted to the memory of his followers.

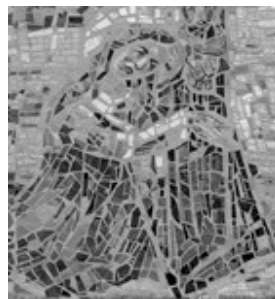
#### The Teaching of the Apostles

Other aspects must be noted in connection with the breaking of the bread, however. The early Christians were devoted to

hearing the teaching of the Apostles and to praying. Their lives were marked by joy and unity. All these attributes are typical of the rite of the Eucharist as practiced by the Christian community in every age and place. There is no Mass without the teaching of the Apostles, nor should there be a Mass without fraternal love and fellowship. Christians should be linked by the bonds of true love when they come together.

#### Genuine Friendship

To celebrate the Eucharist is to pray and to rejoice, and in so doing to create and spread genuine friendship. One trait, in particular, must be obvious in the Christian community that gathers to break the bread of the Eucharist: namely, charity carried out in concrete actions. In the earliest



Christian community some went so far as freely to carry out a prophetic gesture. They sold their own possessions, held all things in common, in order to distribute their resources to those in need. They realized that Christians cannot break bread while neglecting others in need out of selfishness; neither could they be satisfied with enriching others only with fine words.

Charity in its more concrete forms is inseparable from the Eucharist. Proof of this close connection will soon show up in the rite of the Eucharist and, hence, in the life of the Church.

*Excerpted from The Story of the Eucharist  
by Inos Cardinal Biffi*

**Next week:  
The Eucharistic banquet  
is truly a sacred banquet**

*"I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians. We become 'one body', completely joined in a single existence. Love of God and love of neighbor are now truly united: God incarnate draws us all to himself."*

*—Pope Benedict XVI, God is Love, 14*