



# CATHOLIC SCRIPTURE STUDY

Catholic Scripture Study Notes written by Sister Marie Therese, are provided for the personal use of students during their active participation and must not be loaned or given to others.

## SERIES V

### WISDOM LITERATURE AND NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

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## INTRODUCTION

### I. THE EUCHARIST (1 Corinthians 10:16-22, 11:1-34)

This account of the Eucharist in St. Paul's letters is a very important addition to the accounts in the Gospels. What Paul tells here about the Eucharist might have come from Ananias and the disciples at Damascus, or Peter and the Apostles in Jerusalem, or from the Lord Jesus Himself. Actually, Paul tells us in verse 17 that he was instructed by the Lord Jesus. Another important fact of Paul's account is that it is the earliest account on the Eucharist in the new Testament, pre-dating the Gospels as we have them. To us, who have the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist, this account is the same teaching that the Church has always taught: the Eucharist is the real Body and Blood of Jesus, instituted by Jesus at His Last Supper (Luke 22:14-20). In this text, He assigns to the Apostles for the future, what He had just done: "Do this."

This instruction and the fact of the Holy Eucharist given to former pagan Greeks at Corinth

should arouse our own faith and our worthy participation in our "Lord's Supper" which we call "the Mass," a perplexing name until we recall the long use of the Latin "missus est"—at the end of the Communion—you "are dismissed."

#### A. The Eucharist as a Sacrifice (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)

**1. Sacrifice.** This word, "make holy," came down in history from a common belief in a superior being or beings (gods) to whom they owed reverence and service. All cultures instinctively offered something valuable or precious to these "gods" in order to win their approval or help. At the great Aztec worship center in Mexico, we see today many polished stone altars in rows, where human beings whose hearts had been removed were offered as sacrifices. This is a clear testimony to the idea of a sacrifice of something treasured and offered to the god or gods adored. It is always an amazing thing to realize that God Himself sacrificed His Son for us. The story of Jesus fits so well with all this, that it is really the most "Amazing Grace."

**2. Bread and Wine as a Sacrifice.** How is “the cup of blessing” ( 1 Corinthians 10:16) a “sharing in the blood of Christ”? At the Last Supper, the wine poured into the table vessel was changed by Christ’s words at the First Eucharist: “This is my Blood, which will be shed (sacrificed) for you” (Luke 22:20).

Over the bread, Christ “gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them saying, ‘This is my body to be given for you.’” His next words institute another sacrament (a word meaning “make holy”): the Sacrament of Holy Orders; “Do this” (what He had just done He ordered the Apostles to do)—“Take bread, bless it, and say my words, ‘This is My Body to be given for you’” (Luke 22:19). The Apostles, after Jesus’ death, carried out Jesus’ commands, realizing that Holy Thursday’s Passover Meal, instituted long ago by God in His words to Moses, was truly done to Jesus on His Cross the next day.

**B. One Body in Christ (1 Corinthians 10:17, Ephesians 4:3-6, Romans 12:5).** The teaching of Paul on the “one body” which is the Church, has been called “The Mystical Body” of Christ. His symbol of a loaf of bread made up of many grains of wheat, stands for the Church, “We, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Corinthians 10:17b).

This causes in us a certain sadness that Christians of this 20th hundred years since Christ are divided into many churches, some of whom do not teach the Eucharist with the same meaning, and most of whom differ from the belief of the Church through all the centuries. The loss of this unity of the Church is called by some a “reformation of the Church.” It is amazing and sad also that this “Reformation” has now split the “one body” into over four hundred differing Christian churches in the United States alone. We must recognize, however, that the powerful Renaissance Period (the 1500’s) in European nations affected not only all nations, but also their faith, for pagan Grecian and Roman civilizations had been re-

discovered about this time, confusing many at the discovery of such achievements so far superior to Christian Europe. All of this was due to historical events, not to the Christian faith. “Because the loaf of bread is one, we, many though we are, are one body” (1 Corinthians 10:17). The Church, made up of fallible people and of many cultures, has endured many attacks, heresies, and problems.

We will do well to live as Paul advises as he concludes his teaching to the Church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 10:31-33).

**C. The Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-34).** Paul’s words, “I received from the Lord what I handed on to you” agrees with what Luke later wrote about the “Lord’s Supper” in his Gospel. The words in Luke 22:19-20 are the exact words as Paul’s in 1 Corinthians 11:24-25. As we know from Acts, Luke was a Greek convert of St. Paul’s who accompanied him on his journeys, and who wrote the Acts of the Apostles.

Paul adds to his Corinthians and to us that eating this bread and drinking from this cup “proclaims the death of the Lord until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26). So this Lord’s Supper is quite clearly a testimony, a public proclamation that Jesus shed His blood, and took His life’s last breath, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Our “Mass,” then, is not only sharing the Word of God in prayer and song, but is a re-enactment of the action of Jesus at the Paschal Supper table. This is what those Apostles (except the defector, the traitor) taught and re-enacted with the Christians who accepted the faith of the Apostles, and who became the first “converts” of the first “priests and bishops”—the Apostles.

## II. OTHER TEACHING ON THE EUCHARIST (1 Corinthians 10:20-33; 11:1-16, 27-34)

**A. Pagan Sacrifices Compared to Eucharist (1 Corinthians 10:18-22).** The Gen-

tiles offered pagan sacrifices to demons; so Paul declared that Christians may not “partake of the table of the Lord and, likewise, of the table of demons” (1 Corinthians 10:21). Food sold in the market, however, is not a conscience problem, said Paul, nor is food at an unbelievers’ table who has invited you. However, if someone “tells you ‘this was offered in idol worship,’ do not eat it lest you give scandal to that person, who knows it violates your Christian conscience. We must give no offense to anyone, if possible, but we must be careful to eat or drink for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31-32).

**B. Men and Women at Worship (1 Corinthians 10-11).** This teaching of Paul is related to a custom of the time and its meaning for Christians: a man uncovered his head at worship, a woman covers hers. If at Christian worship the Corinthian women deliberately refused to cover their heads, Paul considered it a sign of lack of humility. This custom in Corinth arose as a sign of dependence upon her husband, just as a man is dependent upon Christ as his head. Yet Paul admits that “in the Lord, woman is not independent of man, nor the man independent of woman” (1 Corinthians 11:11)

Another comment on a custom at that time: “It is dishonorable for a man to wear his hair long, while the long hair of a woman is her glory... and has been given her as a covering...” (!) (1 Corinthians 11:14-16).

**C. Preparation for the Eucharistic Communion (1 Corinthians 11:17-22, 27-34)**

**1. Unworthy Communion.** Whoever receives the Body and Blood of the Lord “unworthily sins against the Body and Blood of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:27). This is a clear indication that Paul believed and taught that the bread and the wine became the “Body and Blood of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:27).

The Church has always taught that the “unworthiness” is an unrepented, unconfessed mortal sin, which is serious enough to cause grace in the soul to be lost; for God, infinite holiness, cannot remain in such a soul. Paul’s recommendation is for an examination of conscience first, which the Church has put in our liturgy of the Eucharist in the early prayers (1 Corinthians 11:27-28). But since Christ set up the Sacrament of Penance (John 20:19-23), the Church requires that Sacrament for those in “mortal” sin (death to grace in us) before receiving Holy Communion. The custom today of practically the whole congregation receiving the Holy Eucharist raises the question: Is there no one in the church in serious sin? Such sins are often public knowledge. The effect, however, is very serious for the one in sin—to receive the Lord when in serious sin. It has been pointed out by numerous theologians that our times has “lost the sense of sin.”

**2. Results of Unworthy Communion (1 Corinthians 11:32).** Sickness, infirmity, and dying result, believes Paul, from such unworthy reception of the Eucharist. This would not happen: “if we examined ourselves we would not fall into judgment in this way.” The Lord “chastens us so that we won’t be condemned with the rest of the world” (1 Corinthians 11:32).

**III. SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Corinthians 12:1-30)**

**A. The Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:1-11).** We can not even say “Jesus is Lord” as an expression of our faith without the Holy Spirit. Paul starts his teaching on the gifts of God to us with this recognition of the Third Person that Jesus revealed so often in His public life, particularly in His last long talk that John records in his Gospel.

God gives many gifts through the Holy Spirit to Christians, all for the common good. Paul lists the gifts of speaking with wisdom, of expressing knowledge, the gift of faith, healing, working mi-

rales, prophecy, discernment; the gift of tongues or of interpreting tongues.

**B. The Body of Christ—The Mystical Body (1 Corinthians 12:12-30).** All of us who were baptized were given the same Holy Spirit, one of the Divine Persons, infinite and all-powerful, the same Spirit of God that was in Christ; we all become “in Christ” and He is the “head,” the source of wisdom and knowledge, which moves the rest of the Body and its members and their function. Such a marvelous thing is a body, with all of our members that work together in harmony, even rush to the aid of another, as the hand does for the eye or another member. All the members of a body suffer, rejoice, or feel honored together, says Paul; then he concludes: “You are the Body of Christ.” All of you who are now working with Christ have a special role, a different role, but in the same Body. It is called by theologians by a mysterious name, indeed by a word meaning sort of a mystery: The Mystical Body of Christ. Some other Christians simply say, “We are one Body in Christ; we must love and care for each member.” It is all the same truth; what matters is if we do our part. The Spirit of God guides all sincere Christians into their call in the Body of Christ. One must be close to Christ, close to the Spirit, to choose what way we are led. Young people who rush into a life’s call, without discernment in prayer, are often sadly misled.

But the best gift of all is the Spirit of Jesus; without this, Paul says all the other things we do are useless in the Body of Christ, for love is its heart, and without the heart in it, works are dead. One of Paul’s startling comparisons of such a loss is: “If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” Love is that important; all-important.

And, lastly, in Chapter 14, he instructs his Corinthians in a matter that the church still keeps for Church services: “...make sure that everything is

done properly, and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

#### **IV. THE GIFT OF LOVE (1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 14:1-40).**

Then Paul begins one of the most beautiful descriptions in the whole Bible, on the Gift of Love. St. John tells us that God is love; as God is, so God loves. This is the infinite love we see acting toward the human race. Who would give your son as God did, even though you knew he would rise again?

So we need to believe in that immense love. It is a model for our willing to love—no other activity or action of ours can ever match it. Eloquent speech?—without love, it is a “noisy gong”; faith that moves a mountain?—without love—nothing. Give all to the poor, even your body to the poor? Without love, you gain nothing. Love is the ability, the quality, the will, to be patient, kind, without jealousy. Paul then describes all that it can not be: never rude, self-seeking, never angry or holding on to injuries or rejoicing in what is wrong... as his words swing on, we begin to feel that the ability to really love is the difference between a child and his abilities as a man, or between seeing in a mirror and seeing face to face; between imperfect knowledge and knowing “even as I am known.”

This is the end of the attempt to say what the love of God is—“the way which surpasses all the others.”

Literary scholars find sublime use of language and eloquence in sequence and movement in Chapter 13. We want to use it “as a lesson for a wedding, or something equally foreign to Paul’s intention...” Paul reaches sublimity because his cataract of Love-verb sentences conveys the richness and attractiveness and down-to-earth quality of the Christian life” (LITERARY GUIDE TO THE BIBLE, Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, Harvard University Press, 1987, p. 493).

“Set your hearts on the greater gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:31)—all the gifts of talents, abilities, being a miracle worker, or having any God-given outstanding ability, can not match three other gifts from God by which we excel: faith, hope and love. These are what are called the “Theological gifts”—that form us in our relationship to God, who is infinite, beyond our understanding, and through these gifts to believe in Him (as we be-

lieve in a loving mother or father—having faith in their love); we hope in His love and wisdom in our behalf, and we love Him more than any other being, as we receive the gift of love—the greatest of the theo-(God)-logical (knowledge of) gifts that in the end last!!

Then Paul finishes his descriptions of gifts God gives in Chapter fourteen: to win others to God by letting them see God in you!

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**QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 14**  
**1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians**

Day 1 Read the Notes.

- a. From the notes, what is a sacrifice?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. What were the words used by Jesus in the First Eucharist? What words of Jesus established the priesthood?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. What helped you in the notes?

Day 2 Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Luke 24:1-10.

- a. The Church is founded upon the Apostles. What authority does Paul claim that is in the Church today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Name the beliefs about Christ that Paul handed down to his Church in Corinth.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. Who were the witnesses of the Resurrection?

Day 3 Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, Acts 5:29-32.

- a. How important is the doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead?

- b. Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. What events will occur at the end of time?

Day 4 Read 1 Corinthians 15:29-34, Romans 8:35-36.

- a. Quote a line or so that helps or interests you.

- b. What dangers were the Apostles under always?

Day 5 Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, Genesis 2:7.

- a. Who is the “second man” Paul speaks of in verse 47?

- b. What are the truths we learn in these verses?

- c. What is your response to this text?

Day 6 Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, Philemon 20:21

- a. What do you learn in verse 51?

- b. Quote some words that are most joyful in this wonderful news.