

SHARING THE EUCHARIST WITH OTHERS

If I could believe that Jesus is present in the Eucharist, I would crawl over broken glass if necessary to be with him.

These are the words of a minister from another Christian church to a friend of mine. Sometimes, when I think of these words, I wonder if our practice and behaviour, including in Church, suggests that we Catholics may have come to take the Eucharist at times for granted.

INTRODUCTION: THE CLEAREST SIGN OF WHAT JESUS WANTS

The Eucharist is the greatest sign Jesus gave of his desire to have the closest personal relationship possible with each one of us. Who can misunderstand his intention if they recall his words: 'Take and eat' 'Take and drink'? He cannot be any closer to each of us than within us.

Jesus taught too that the life of God will not grow within us unless we receive him in the Eucharist [John 6:53]:

...if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

This 'life' is the source of all Christian blessings. It empowers love to overcome selfishness; the will, to overcome dominating emotions; and inner goodness, to conquer human weaknesses, failings and temptations. There are many other examples. From this 'life' we receive God's guidance, and the inner strengthening needed to live as a Christian in the world of today.

Yet, many people in today's world do not have sufficient faith in the Eucharist to deepen this life within them. And more and more Catholics are not joining in celebrations of the Mass. This is of concern to so many parents, grand parents, family members, friends, priests and fellow parishioners.

As Jesus warned, because they 'do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood', God's life is not growing in these people. As a result, without the guidance God gives through the Eucharist, many are experiencing personal confusion that God does not intend. This affects how they see themselves and their purposes in life. It affects major life and career decisions. Many make mistakes from which Jesus would like to protect them. Sometimes these mistakes lead to further serious consequences for themselves, their families and for other relationships.

Without God's life growing within them, many today find themselves unable at times to resist selfishness, temptations, strong emotions and other human failings and weaknesses. Many find that they do not always have the resolve to resist peer and social pressures that make it hard to live as Jesus taught.

Among those we know and who do not appreciate the Eucharist, do they:

- appreciate what God's life means?
- understand that they need to receive the Eucharist if this life is to grow within them?
- see the consequences in daily life of receiving or not receiving the Eucharist?
- reflect upon possible adversities in their lives that may be the result of God's life not growing within them?

The insistence of Jesus that his followers 'eat his flesh' and 'drink his blood' led the Church to legislate that Catholics normally should participate in celebrations of the Eucharist each Sunday. The past two thousand years have taught Catholics that there are life consequences for those who do, and for those who do not, receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Usually, those who do not go to Mass do not understand this.

The purpose of this pamphlet

This pamphlet is offered to Catholics who want to share their appreciation for the Eucharist with others who do not have this appreciation. It presents *basic* ideas only.

There is no attempt to deal with the whole of Catholic teaching on the Eucharist. The only points presented are those which, hopefully, will help those who normally do not go to Mass to begin to appreciate what they are missing.

Suggestions on how the ideas that follow could be used are given later.

A. GOD CREATED US FOR GOD TO LOVE

No one can understand Jesus' teachings on the Eucharist without first understanding three basic ideas:

- God is calling each of us into personal relationship
- Christian faith is built upon a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit deepens this relationship.

God is calling us into personal relationship

God wants every human being on Planet Earth to enter into a deep loving relationship with their Creator. God seeks first to call each into this relationship through the spectacle of creation. The spectacle of the galaxies, the power of the ocean, the awesome phenomena of nature, the detail of a new born baby's fingers – all are like advertisements of God saying: 'I am present with you, I love you, please let me into your life'.

God calls people in others ways too. Among the most powerful are the yearnings and questions of the human heart. These may be for unconditional love, inner peace or freedom. Only God can fully satisfy these yearnings, and the questions related to them. People may try to satisfy them through other ways, but the yearnings will remain long term until each person relates closely with God.

The greatest way God calls people into relationship is through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is also like us, fully human. In Jesus, God sought to communicate with people through human words and actions – to relate with them personally.

It is Jesus who made it possible for us to relate as 'adopted' sons and daughters intimately with our loving God [Galatians 4:5]. It is only by relating with God in this way that Christians can fully experience God's guidance, help, inner strengthening and other blessings in their lives.

Do those we know and who do not appreciate the Eucharist, realise;

- God's basic desire for a personal relationship with them?
- God lives within them through Baptism?
- Creation is like an advertisement for God's desire for relationship?
- the deepest yearnings within their hearts can be satisfied fully only by relating with God?

Christian faith is based upon a personal relationship with Jesus

The starting point for Christian faith is not the teachings of Christ, but a *close personal relationship* with him. Only he can share with us the divine power needed to live his teachings. This power grows within us gradually to the extent that we pray, worship and try to live as he taught.

Without this power, many of Christ's teachings can be almost impossible to live at times. Those related to selfless love, marriage, justice and human sexuality are a few of today's examples.

Without divine power, social influences, peer pressures and strong emotions can be irresistible. So can personal temptations, addictions and personality weaknesses.

Do those we know and who do not appreciate the Eucharist realise that:

- Christianity is based upon a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?
- this relationship is the source of the divine power needed to live fully as he taught?
- without this relationship, people are left to their own resources to battle the human weaknesses that make it hard to live Christ's teachings?
- mistakenly believe, for example, that Christian faith is about love as a Commandment, whereas really it is about Christ empowering us to love like him [John 13:34].

The Holy Spirit deepens the Christian faith relationship

Human relationships either grow stronger, or eventually they die. They require the nourishment of selfless love. Hence, there need to be times of self-giving in any developing relationship, when there seems little or no return. Eventually, of course, people realise that, while there *seemed* to be little emotional or intellectual return, there was at a deeper level a growing sense of 'wholeness' and 'inner harmony'.

The same is true for a relationship with God. God allows times when we seem 'to get little or nothing' out of faith. Prayer can seem hard, and Mass 'boring', so, some ask, 'why continue these activities?'

God allows such times because, as the Creator who understands us better than we can ever understand ourselves, God knows we need periods of self-giving to God if our personal relationships with our Creator are to mature. In turn, only maturing relationships with God

bring a deepening sense of personal wholeness and inner harmony within a person – and peace of soul. A maturing relationship with God is the secure foundation needed to experience God's guidance, power and other blessings.

Do those we know and who do not appreciate the Eucharist realise that:

- *humans cannot deepen in any relationship without times of selflessness love?*
- *periods where prayer and worship seem unrewarding can be the result of God helping us to learn to love our Creator selflessly, and to deepen in relationship?*

B. WHAT JESUS DOES IN THE EUCHARIST

Jesus instituted the Eucharist during his Last Supper with his disciples. During each Mass, the priest repeats the words and actions of Jesus, as he commanded:

*'Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body
which will be given up for you.
'Take this, all of you, and drink it: this is the
cup of my blood.
'Do this in memory of me.'*

Jesus explained these actions as central to his 'new covenant' (the 'new relationship' he made possible between God and the human race). The Eucharist is always about the relationship between God, through Jesus.

Whenever a priest celebrates the Eucharist, Jesus, with the Holy Spirit, repeats again the miracle of the Last Supper. He changes the substances of bread and wine into his Body and Blood.

This presence of Jesus is called 'the real presence'. While he is present also in many other ways to his followers, the Eucharist is called 'real' because, in the Eucharist, he is present in the fullest sense: substantially and completely [*Catechism* 1374].

Whenever we think of the powerful universe, which was created from nothing, we know that Jesus could have changed the appearances of the bread and wine as well. However, he wished to be present in a way that is accessible to his followers all over the world until the end of time.

Do those we know and who do not appreciate the Eucharist realise:

- *the Eucharist is essential for a growing relationship with Jesus?*
- *Jesus is really present in the Eucharist?*

What is Jesus doing in the Eucharist

Catholics believe that Christ is present in the Eucharist. However, many do not realise what he is doing during the Mass. They tend to think of him being present in a passive way.

In reality, he is doing three things: he offers himself to God the Father in sacrifice; he shares the power of his Resurrection with all who draw upon it; and he makes his own the prayers of all who really participate.

Jesus offers himself in sacrifice

Jesus showed the Eucharist to be his self-offering sacrifice to God the Father, by instituting it during the Last Supper. This was the night before he offered his life on the cross on Calvary.

The first thing Jesus does during every Mass, therefore, is make Calvary present again. He makes present his complete self-offering in sacrifice to God the Father for the human race.

Jesus shares the power of his Resurrection

The death of Jesus on Calvary led to his Resurrection. During the Eucharist, Jesus shares the divine power of his Resurrection with all who join him by offering their lives too to God the Father.

This power is greater than death. It can empower those who seek it to rise above every human temptation, weakness and failing. Nothing within us is beyond its strength

Jesus makes our prayers his own

The Eucharist is the prayer of Jesus, to God the Father. As Son of God, the power of the prayer of Jesus is infinite. Unlike our prayer, his prayer is without any self-centred or mixed motives. Hence, the power of his prayer is limitless.

The prayers of human beings, on the other hand, are limited. Mixed motives, personal failings and sinfulness weaken their purity and sincerity.

During the Eucharist, Jesus makes his own the prayers of his followers. They become more powerful.

This is why Catholics have prayed for their own, and others' needs and concerns during the Mass for two thousand years. Catholics have also asked for Masses to be offered for special needs.

And, as he promised, God will always grant these prayers, provided they are for the genuine good of the person. Otherwise, God gives other blessings. Jesus made it clear that God will never grant what will be harmful to a person, just as a parent would not give something harmful to their child no matter how much the child wanted it. [eg Matthew 7:7-11; James 1:6-8; 1 John 5:14-15].

Do those we know, and who do not appreciate the Eucharist, appreciate:

- *what Jesus is doing through the Eucharist?*
- *Christ's desire to share with others the power of his Resurrection?*
- *the power of Christ's prayer?*
- *that Jesus makes his own the prayers of all who participate in the Eucharist?*

C. HOW TO DRAW ON THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

The Resurrection was the climax of Christ's life and death. There was just one focus to his life – to do always the will of his Father [John 6:38].

This is the key to people understanding how to draw on the power of Christ's Resurrection for their daily lives. They need:

- to strive to live as God wills
- to 'die' to everything in their lives that might lead them to think, speak and behave differently from how God wills.

The two parts of the Mass

The celebration of the Mass is in two parts. Everything else leads to, or follows from, these parts. Together, these parts relate to life, 'death' – and the power of the Resurrection:

- the Liturgy of the Word relates to life and 'death'
- the Eucharistic Sacrifice relates to 'death' and Resurrection.

What Christ offers through the Liturgy of the Word

During his life on earth, people went to Jesus for answers to their personal questions, for guidance, for a deeper understanding of God and to learn how they should live their lives [eg Mark 10:17-22; Matthew 18; 6:25-34; Luke 10:25-28]. Jesus today offers guidance and answers to personal questions, through the Liturgy of the Word in each Mass.

The Liturgy of the Word begins with the proclamation of the scriptures. It concludes with the Prayer of The Faithful.

The Word relates to life

Christ 'speaks' within the hearts of those who seek his guidance, and answers to their life questions, through the Liturgy of the Word. He shares the Holy Spirit, who stirs listeners' thoughts so that eventually, the guidance or answers they are seeking become clear. This includes answer to questions such as 'What is the purpose of my life?' 'How can I find true happiness?' 'What is my life calling?' 'How does Christ's teaching relate to this situation?' 'How can I change for the better?' 'How can I overcome temptations and peer pressures to do wrong?'

If we truly listen to the reading of the Scriptures, and to the homily as it relates these Scriptures to life today, we are stirred by the Spirit from within to see how the messages of the readings relate to our personal lives. One result may be that we find ourselves challenged or encouraged.

This Liturgy also deepens our understanding of Christ's teachings. It deepens our ability to think about issues that arise in today's world in the light of the Gospel. It points to solutions to today's problems.

The possibilities Christ offers are endless for those who truly seek his guidance and answers through the Word. One person may come to new insights into a marriage problem; another may have the same experience in relation to a relationship question. A parent may gain new insights into parenting, a young person may discover their vocation and career direction. Someone may need new insight because of some experience that has led to disillusionment with their parish or the wider Church.

People struggling with illness and old age can find new meaning to their lives, and the true value to their sufferings. Those struggling with anger and other emotional issues can find themselves discovering any hurts that underlie these difficulties. They may discover too the need and the courage to seek counselling or other professional help.

These are a few examples of what the Spirit can stir during one or many Masses, or outside of Mass. It depends upon our life of daily prayer, and on how deep our life issues are.

The Spirit's guidance may become clear when we are praying at home, when we are thinking quietly, during a conversation, or as we reflect upon a recent event. There are as many examples as there are people. The possibilities are limitless.

Normally the Spirit works gently within a person, leading quietly those who listen. People can be completely unaware of what the Spirit is doing quietly and gradually in their lives until they begin to look back. Then they discover that their thinking has changed or that troubling questions have been answered.

People who expect sudden insights, or quick solutions, often underestimate how deep can be the source of whatever dominating emotion, bad habit, addiction or other human weakness they may be experiencing. They may even lose faith, and give up going to Mass.

But the Holy Spirit, who understands each of us far more deeply than we can ever hope to understand ourselves, will not be rushed – or move us to change in ways or at a pace that could harm us.

Those who wish to help others appreciate the Eucharist need first to ask themselves: 'Where in my life do I need Christ's guidance, or answers to important life questions?'

The Word calls us 'to die'

As Spirit's guidance for their lives grows, often listeners to the Word see that change is needed. It may be the need to overcome selfishness, or an attitude that does not reflect the good in us; to begin resisting some regular temptation; to overcome a strong emotion or an emotional habit; to change a bad habit or to face up to some addiction. Each of these calls to change is an example of 'dying', especially when the change is difficult.

The dying may also involve persistence in our prayer when this is not easy, or going to Mass even though 'nothing seems to be happening' within us. A major challenge can be giving control of our lives over to God, and to wait for God to do what is best.

We need to keep asking ourselves: 'Where in my life am I being called to die, so that I might live more as God calls?'

The Word calls to pray for Resurrection

Any temptation or weakness that is hard to overcome is an example of where the power of Christ's Resurrection is needed. We cannot achieve deep and significant personal change by human effort alone.

This power builds upon our personal efforts – but never *substitutes* for them. To draw on this power, we need during the Liturgy of the Word:

- to resolve to do all that we can ourselves to change
- to pray for the power of Christ's Resurrection to help us.

This leads us to reflect upon the question: 'For what personal weakness or other difficulty am I seeking the help of the power of Christ's Resurrection during the Mass at present?'

Do those we know, and who do not appreciate the Eucharist, realise:

- the possibility of bringing the questions troubling their hearts to Christ in the Liturgy of the Word, just as people approached Jesus with their questions two thousand years ago?
- the possibility of receiving Christ's guidance for their lives?

What Christ offers through the Eucharistic Sacrifice

The Last Supper was a Passover Meal – a sacrificial meal. Its purpose was to thank God for freeing the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt.

The Eucharistic Sacrifice, which Jesus instituted during the Last Supper, begins with the Preface of the Mass, and concludes when the priest(s) receive Holy Communion. As mentioned already, during each Mass, Jesus makes present again his act of self offering on Calvary. This is the act that led to his Resurrection.

Jesus shares the power of his Resurrection with anyone who joins him in this self-offering in the Eucharist, by offering their own lives to God the Father also in sacrifice.

What can we offer of ourselves in sacrifice?

In practice, there are two ways we can join Jesus in his act of self-offering, by offering ourselves too to God the Father. The first is by offering our efforts 'to die', or to change as the Liturgy of the Word has called us to. This includes our efforts to overcome selfishness, temptations, strong emotions and the other examples of 'dying' mentioned earlier.

The second is to offer everything else in our lives with Jesus, just as he offered his whole life to his Father. This includes our family and married lives, our daily struggles and routines, and our times of relaxation. Also important are our work, our projects, and anything else that we are doing for, or on behalf of, our parish or diocese. These examples may seem unimportant to us, but they are not unimportant to God

We need to offer too the intentions of our daily prayers, both for ourselves and for others. And, as Jesus himself demonstrated on the cross, of special importance are our physical or psychological sufferings.

Offering ourselves more fully with Jesus, to God the Father in sacrifice through the Eucharist, means offering every aspect of our lives. We need to keep asking: 'What of my life do I offer God each time I participate in the Eucharist?'

Christ shares the power of his Resurrection

Jesus shares the power of his Resurrection with all who join him by offering their lives to God in the Mass. This power can change our lives. It can help us 'to die' to whatever makes it hard for us to live as God calls. Again, the extent and speed at which this happens depends upon our daily prayer, and on how deep the difficulty is.

Being more powerful than death, the power of Christ's Resurrection can conquer every human weakness. No temptation, confusion, emotion, habit or attitude can withstand it. Though its effects can be immediate, usually they are gentler and gradual. We need to keep drawing on this power through celebrations of the Eucharist over time, especially if what we need to overcome is deep in us.

Through the Eucharist, the power of Christ's Resurrection gradually can change also the personalities of those who seek it. It can strengthen love against selfishness; forgiveness, against hurts and resentments; acceptance of others, against jealousies and racist attitudes. Its effects are lasting in those who keep on praying daily, worshipping and trying to live as Jesus taught. However, these effects weaken in those who fail to do these things.

The power of Christ's Resurrection can conquer the strongest of temptations, such as those against justice, compassion, chastity, truthfulness and fidelity in marriage. It can bring consolation to those who are sick, frail or grieving; inner strength against trials and challenges; deeper joy in times of fear and difficulty; and it can replace confusion with guidance.

As St Paul drew on this power for his own life, he rejoiced that he could 'know Christ and the power of his Resurrection' [Philippians 3:10].

As with the Liturgy of the Word, if a weakness we need to change is the result of a deeper weakness, there may be no change until the deeper weakness is discovered and healed. For example, if a person finds it hard to forgive because of a deeper hurt stemming from childhood, forgiveness may not come quickly. Christ may lead them to seek healing for the hurt first, and to place this before God in the Eucharist.

Each of us needs to ask: 'Where in my life do I need now to draw on the Power of Christ's Resurrection?' 'What am I offering from my life so that I can unite myself with him in his act of self-offering?'

Many who do not appreciate the Eucharist do not see how it can relate to their lives. We may be able to help them do so when they share with us personally their relational, and the other difficulties in their lives.

What Christ offers through Holy Communion

After the completion of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, Catholics complete their self-offering with Christ by receiving him in Holy Communion, usually beginning with the deacon and acolytes at the Mass. This is a most sacred moment, for to receive Holy Communion is to receive Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Catholics, conscious of the deep meaning of Holy Communion, find special experiences of Christ growing within them through receiving this sacrament over time. However, anyone who receives Holy Communion routinely, or without thought, is not likely to enjoy the following experiences. Eventually, they are likely to decide it makes little difference to them whether they receive Jesus in Holy Communion or not.

Like the Mass, the spiritual blessings flowing from Holy Communion can also change aspects of the lives of those who receive it gradually, but radically. Again, this depends upon the extent to which they offer their lives to God the Father (even if outside the Eucharist), their daily prayer and their efforts always to live as Jesus taught.

Deeper personal union with Christ

Holy Communion deepens the intimacy of our personal relationship with Jesus. To the extent we allow his influence to deepen within us, our personalities gradually change. They become more like the personality of Jesus.

Just as a couple, who have been married for decades, find that each affects the other's thoughts and attitudes, so intimacy with Christ leads us increasingly to think and to see more as he does. His peace grows within us.

The spiritual is nourished within us

Jesus nourishes the spiritual within those who receive him in Holy Communion. This includes those human qualities that are ours because we have been created in the image and likeness of God, such as love, goodness, mercy and justice.

Then there are the spiritual gifts we received through Baptism and Confirmation, the Sacrament of Marriage, and the Sacrament of Holy Orders. All of these gifts need nourishment to mature.

Frees from venial sin

Jesus forgives venial sin in those who receive him in Holy Communion. Also, he heals the spiritual weaknesses and other damage these sins cause. He strengthens us against temptations to sin again – especially to commit mortal sin. Our personalities, especially our potential for goodness, are strengthened, and the chains of our human weaknesses weaken.

Strengthens Christ-like love

Christ strengthens his love within those who receive him in Holy Communion. Being divine, this love is more powerful than the love of human beings. It is also pure, free of all selfishness.

Our capacity to love God and neighbour grows stronger. Increasingly we can keep the Commandments as Jesus taught, and overcome temptations to do wrong.

Strengthens community

As Jesus draws closer to himself each person who receives him through Holy Communion, he draws us closer to each other also at a deeper spiritual level. In this way, he deepens the sense of Christian community among us. This includes deepening the spiritual bond between married couples, families and friends.

This is the foundation that changes parishes into vibrant Christian communities. Where parishioners fail to unite themselves to Christ, a parish's community will be superficial. It will lack a sense of Christian mission, an indispensable sign that a parish is also a genuinely Christian community.

Deepening Christ-like attitudes

Finally, as the influence of Christ grows in those drawn closer to him through Holy Communion, so do his basic attitudes. These include commitment to the poor and needy, and a deepening desire to Christian unity.

The need for Mass preparation

For anyone who reflects upon how the Eucharist can affect our lives, all of the above can lead to a sense of hope. It means that nothing in our lives is irredeemable.

However, the extent to which we have the kinds of experiences that were described earlier depends upon how sincerely we participate in the Eucharist, the quality of our daily prayer, and our efforts to live always as Jesus taught. These experiences cannot be expected by anyone who goes to Mass without thought and preparation. Instead they are likely to find the Eucharist routine, 'boring' and dissatisfying.

Preparation for the Liturgy of the word

No one can hope for the experiences described during the Liturgy of the Word without preparation. They require 'listening' – both to the Word and to our hearts. They are less likely to be experienced by someone who goes to Mass without preparing themselves in ways, such as:

- taking time before Mass to think about what is going to happen
- a period of prayer before Mass begins, naming the life-concerns or life-questions where Christ's help is being sought
- reading the scripture passages beforehand, asking the question: 'How might any of their messages relate to my life?'
- mentioning major concerns beforehand in prayer.

Preparation will not be difficult or too time consuming for anyone who includes their life events, concerns and questions in their daily prayer.

Preparation for the Eucharistic Sacrifice

To experience the power of the Resurrection through the Eucharist, we need to be open to it. We need to be aware of the areas in our lives, including where we find hard 'to die' to live as Jesus calls, and where we cannot change without it.

This requires us to be honest with God and ourselves about the temptations, attitudes, dominating emotions, habits, addictions and other weaknesses that affect our lives. Some who do not realise the power Christ offers through the Eucharist might see these as negatives – but for those eager 'to know Christ and the power of his Resurrection', they are golden opportunities.

Difficulties despite preparation

Christ always fulfils the promise of the Eucharist in those who have prepared. However, the ways he does so may not be as expected.

This can be due to possible reasons described earlier. For example it may be because the area in their life where the worshipper seeks divine guidance and power is the symptom of a deeper need – and Christ is leading the worshipper to realise this, and to open themselves to divine help at this deeper level. Or perhaps Christ wants to deepen the worshipper's relationship with him by worshipping in selfless love.

There can be many reasons. However, what will always be true is that Christ will always give the guidance and power the worshipper really needs. Usually, these will be experienced gently and gradually.

The meaning of receiving Holy Communion

Receiving Holy Communion is a public act within the Church community. It proclaims two things.

First, it proclaims commitment to a personal relationship with Christ according to *his* criteria: 'If you love me you will keep my Commandments' [John 14:15]. This is why the Church teaches that one needs to be in the state of grace to receive Holy Communion.

Second, it proclaims 'communion' with the Catholic community. This communion is built upon personal faith in the teachings of Christ, as handed down by the Catholic community over the past two thousand years. This is why only Catholics can receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church.

Eucharistic adoration

In early Christian times, consecrated Hosts were kept after Mass for the sick and dying. Before long, however, people began to go to pray where the Eucharist was reserved in this way.

This practice continues today. It can bring great consolation to anyone who responds to Jesus' invitation: 'Come to me all you who labour and are over burdened, and I will give you rest' [Matthew 11:28]. I would urge all Catholics to avail of Jesus' invitation by making visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament wherever there is an opportunity to do so.

There can be difficulties in places where churches have to be locked for security reasons. However, many parishes have their churches open before and after Mass, as well as for practices such as Holy Hours. These are marvellous opportunities for all of us to adore the Lord.

Using the ideas in this pamphlet

Many will be surprised by the presentation of the basic ideas on the Eucharist in this pamphlet. They apply pastoral principles used from earliest times by the Church to present the Gospel. Examples of these principles include:

- when proclaiming the Gospel, the actual moment of grace within the hearer is when the Gospel teaching encounters the personal experience of the listener
- proclaiming the Gospel includes helping the listener to develop a more Christ-like personality
- the empowerment the Gospel offers needs to be presented as a priority.

Conversations, and occasions when someone who does not go to Mass shares some personal question, hope or worry, are examples of opportunities to share ideas in this pamphlet. Each is a chance to share with them some idea about the Eucharist.

Ideas can be shared also in discussions about 'Why go to Mass?' and similar questions. The main thing is to be aware of is opportunities when they arise.

Life opportunities are the best because no one can plant seeds of personal faith in the Eucharist until they help the other person connect whatever idea they want to share with the other person's personal experience. When they share life questions or concerns, half the idea is already in place. In any discussion on the Eucharist, abstract ideas cannot work on their own. They need bedding in personal experiences, as has been done in this pamphlet.

What needs to be avoided is discussing the Eucharist in ways that are 'too preachy' or which leave the impression in others that the ideas 'are being rammed down their throats'. Any Gospel sharing will always propose – never impose. To attempt to force ideas on others usually only 'gets their backs up'.

Most important of all, we need to appreciate the Eucharist ourselves and how it can affect our lives. No one can share with others what they do not appreciate themselves.

Hopefully, the ideas in this pamphlet will help you share the Eucharist with others in your life.

Most Rev Gerard J Holohan

Bishop of Bunbury

17 January 2005