



## The Meaning of the Eucharist in Everyday Life

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### Article History

Received: 5 July 2023

Revised: 15 July 2023

Accepted: 5 August 2023

Published: 1 Sept 2023

**Keywords:** daily mass;  
eucharistic sacrifice  
spiritual life; spiritual  
journey

**Abstract:** The focus of this article is on the significance of the Eucharist in the daily lives of Catholic believers who attend Daily Mass. Despite their busy work schedules, they participate in the Eucharist, recognizing that spiritual life helps them face the routine of work. The article adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, with interviews as the data collection technique. Informants are individuals who celebrate the Eucharist at the Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Kayutangan, Malang. Research findings indicate that the Eucharist is a longing to encounter God. It serves as a source of strength for their daily journey. Through unity with Christ, they believe they are better prepared to face life's challenges. They also believe that they offer life's struggles through the Eucharist. Because of the Eucharist, the life of Christ becomes tangible in their everyday joys and sorrows. By receiving communion, they unite with Christ. Daily Mass becomes the source and culmination of their lives as they navigate daily existence in the light of Christ himself.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Eucharist originates from Jesus' own action during the Last Supper with His disciples (cf. Matt. 26:26-29). It is given as the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, uniting Jesus with the entire redeemed human race. The word "Eucharist" comes from the Greek word "Eucharistein," meaning "giving thanks to God" (CCC 1328). Through the Eucharist, humanity participates in it, becoming one Body with Him. The Eucharist is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God the Father, where the Church expresses gratitude for God's goodness in everything: creation, redemption through Christ, and sanctification. This offering of praise is presented by the Church to the Father through Christ: by Christ, with Him, and accepted in Him (CCC 1359-1361). The term "Holy Mass" is used because the celebration of this mystery of salvation concludes with the sending forth of the faithful (*missio*) to carry out God's will in daily life.

Within the Eucharist itself, two crucial elements that have become integral parts are the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. These components trace their origins to the teachings of Jesus when He revealed Himself to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-35). At that time, Jesus explained to them the writings of the prophets before taking bread, blessing it, breaking it, and sharing it with them. These two elements, the reading of

Scripture and the breaking of the bread, lay the foundation for the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, continuing to be part of the celebration of the Holy Mass in the Catholic Church to this day.

There are several teachings related to the theology of the Eucharist that are noteworthy. Firstly, the doctrine of real presence affirms the true presence of Jesus Christ in the form of bread and wine. Christ is not present merely as a symbol in the form of bread and wine but genuinely exists in the form of bread and wine. Christ is entirely and truly present behind every appearance or part of the bread and wine. Therefore, receiving Holy Communion does not necessarily have to be in both forms but can be in either form. The permanent nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharistic liturgy also serves as the foundation for the practice of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

Secondly, the concept of transubstantiation indicates that the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist undergo a total change into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ. However, the external appearances of the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ remain the same – the bread is white, round, made of wheat, and the wine is red and liquid. Transubstantiation is understood as a change in the essence or reality of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. This essence can only be apprehended through the lens of faith.

This research aims to explore the impact of the daily participation of Catholic believers in the celebration of the Eucharist or Mass. The questions addressed in this study are: first, what impact do individuals experience when regularly attending Daily Mass on their daily lives? Second, what longings do Catholic believers have for their spiritual lives amidst worldly busyness and work routines? These questions will help investigate the relationship between the Eucharist and the daily practices of Catholic believers, as presented in the theological ideas of Karl Rahner.

## **METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. The qualitative descriptive approach using interviews is a research method that utilizes interviews as a data collection technique. The aim of this approach is to provide a detailed and comprehensive description or depiction of a phenomenon or event. In this approach, data is collected through interviews with informants who possess knowledge or experience related to the phenomenon or event under investigation.

The interviewed informants will be asked structured questions based on an interview instrument prepared by the interviewer. The interview instrument consists of general and open-ended questions, making it easier for informants to understand. Moreover, the dynamics of the interview assume an exploration of as much information as possible from the informants. Interviewers can encourage informants to provide more detailed and in-depth explanations. Additionally, interviewers can adjust the direction of the interview based on the information obtained from the informants. The informants involved in this study are those who regularly attend daily Mass at the targeted Parish Church.

In researching Catholics in the city of Malang who, amidst their work commitments, are committed to regularly attending daily Mass, the chosen research location is the Catholic Parish Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Kayutangan, Malang-East Java, Indonesia, where the parish church provides daily Mass services during the day. The research subjects are several individuals who appear to be actively and regularly attending daily Mass at the targeted parish church.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The research article, using a qualitative descriptive approach with interviews, selected a sample by interviewing seven individuals who attend Daily Mass at the Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Kayutangan, Malang.

Firstly, the internal motivation that drives someone to participate in the Celebration of the Eucharist. Practically, those attending Daily Mass at the church first adapt the distance from their homes to the parish and the daily busyness they experience. Nevertheless, they have already realized that participating in the Celebration of the Eucharist is a longing to meet God. The faithful seek not only communion but also an opportunity or time to meet, talk, and listen to God. This awareness purifies the calling of every Christian to worship God. From initially being a routine, Daily Mass eventually becomes a necessity that strengthens daily life. The faithful realize that the Eucharist is nourishment for the soul, strengthening the spirit. The opportunity to attend Daily Mass is something to be thankful for, as it might not be experienced elsewhere. Gratitude is rooted in the awareness that God is willing to help humanity through His sacrificial love on the cross. Therefore, this gratitude should be present in daily life, as God always helps in every challenge.

Secondly, the strength and affirmation from God. Findings from the interviews in this research reveal what the faithful seek for their lives through their presence in Daily Mass. They realize that the Body and Blood of Christ they receive provide strength for their daily journey. The faithful genuinely believe that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist truly occurs through the event of Transubstantiation. Through unity with Christ, they believe that they will be more prepared to face every challenge in their lives because the struggles in life are also offered together with the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Additionally, the homilies delivered by the priests during the Celebration of the Eucharist provide spiritual advice that strengthens them.

Thirdly, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. From the interviews, it can be concluded that the most anticipated part for the faithful is the "consecration." This part is the most awaited because they believe that it is when God truly becomes present with them. Consecration is the moment when the bread and wine offered in the Eucharist are transformed into the actual Body and Blood of Christ. The faithful present all their life issues during this moment of Consecration, and during communion, when they experience union with Christ, they feel truly relieved from all the struggles and challenges of life.

In the light of the Second Vatican Council, the mystery of the Holy Eucharist as a liturgical celebration is a form of the implementation of the priestly task of Christ. As a public celebration, it is the action of Christ as the Priest together with His Body, the Church. The

Second Vatican Council enriched the Eucharist with cultural richness and renewed the faith life of the faithful to better understand the sacred mystery of the Eucharist being celebrated because it directly touches various aspects of their lives. Thus, the Eucharist truly becomes the action of Christ with the Church and becomes the source and summit of Christian life.

The Celebration of the Eucharist becomes a Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ. His sacrifice becomes the foundation of His love for humanity. The Celebration of the Eucharist is always preserved in the life of the early community. The Scripture itself is the source of information that the Celebration of the Eucharist is the essence of the activities of the early community: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

The Celebration of the Eucharist or Holy Mass, as the primary and essential liturgical celebration of the Church, inherently declares that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church's life (LG 11). If mentioned as the source and summit in the life of the Church, the Eucharist has a very close connection with the daily life patterns of Catholic believers. The Church as a gathering of people who believe in Christ comes together as one in the Eucharist. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* art. 10 states, "For the aim of all apostolic endeavor is that all who have been reborn through faith and baptism may come together to worship God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the Sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's Supper." The apostolate of the faithful in the Church's mission finds its place in the activities and daily lives of the faithful amidst various works and responsibilities of every Catholic believer.

The Celebration of the Eucharist or Holy Mass as the source and summit of the Church's life becomes the starting point and primary responsibility of a parish to then provide and offer itself for the continuation of the Celebration of the Eucharist in the daily lives of the faithful. Therefore, the existence of Daily Mass is a response to the needs of the faithful to draw spiritual strength from God Himself through the regular Celebration of the Eucharist in their daily lives.

The characteristic secularism of profane life in urban society seemingly separates religious life from secular life. Nevertheless, Catholic believers realize that spiritual life can be beneficial for their spirit in facing the fatigue amid the busyness of work and complex routines.

Karl Rahner, in one of his articles titled "The Eucharist and Our Daily Lives," states: "As we leave the sacred environment, we enter the everyday environment, a world that is entirely profane, and in this world, God seems far away." However, Rahner rejects this perspective. Rahner instead conveys a new idea that "the Eucharist as the sacrament of eternal encounter with God, which becomes the climax of the history of our salvation in the history of our personal lives, is the sacrament of everyday life." The grace from the Eucharist provides strength for Catholic believers to realize it in the struggles of daily life. The Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's life shows a connection or relationship between the Eucharist and the entire life of the Church. The Eucharist is never detached from the daily life practices of Catholic believers. The Eucharist truly finds its meaning when it has an impact on the daily lives of Catholic believers.

The faith of Catholic believers, truly emanating from the Eucharist, nurtures mature faith in the active involvement of the faithful in organizing a society illuminated by Gospel values, making society more humane, universally prosperous, just, incorruptible, respectful and obedient to the law, democratic, and respecting human rights. Making the Eucharist the Source and Summit of the Church's life means presenting the Church as a means for the realization of the Kingdom of God in the midst of society where the Church lives and becomes a part of it (GS 45).

The central idea in Karl Rahner's sacramental theology is grace. The concept of grace must be understood in the entire history of salvation. The history of God's salvation is the implementation of God's self-giving. God not only conveys His word and will to humanity, but He also gives Himself to humanity. Karl Rahner understands grace as God's self-giving to the world. Jesus Christ becomes the fulfillment of God's self-giving entirely. Therefore, Karl Rahner calls Jesus Christ the primordial sacrament. Jesus Christ becomes the primordial sacrament because He signifies and simultaneously presents the self-giving of God.

The Church becomes a means for the continuous presence of Jesus Christ in the world. Therefore, Karl Rahner also calls the Church the fundamental sacrament. The Church as the fundamental sacrament becomes a sign of the presence of Christ and all His salvific works, which present and carry out God's self-giving to the world throughout the history of humanity. In the doctrine of faith, the Catholic Church mentions the existence of seven sacraments. Karl Rahner understands these seven sacraments as the embodiment of God's self-giving in Jesus Christ through the Church to the world according to the situation and condition of humanity. The Sacrament of the Eucharist is one of the seven sacraments in the Catholic Church. However, Karl Rahner sees the Eucharist as the most special sacrament of the Church.

Martasudjita, in his discussion of Karl Rahner's sacramental thought, provides key points of Karl Rahner's ideas (Martasudjita, 2013). Rahner states that in the Celebration of the Eucharist, the bloody sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is truly present through the liturgical action of the Church carried out according to Christ's will. Rahner also emphasizes the meaning of Christ's self-offering as the Servant of the Lord who suffered for the salvation of others (cf. Isa. 53:4-12). The Celebration of the Eucharist is genuinely a banquet, to the extent that during this banquet, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ are offered as nourishment, and at the same time, it is genuinely a sacrifice, as the Church's sacrifice in the Eucharist is only one: the sacrifice of the cross of Christ.

The Eucharist, as a celebration of both a banquet and a sacrifice, is a unity in theological understanding, just as the mystery of the Incarnation, the death and resurrection, and the ascension of Christ. The content or efficacy of the Sacrament of the Eucharist is nothing but the self-giving of God Himself, as culminated in Jesus Christ and is now presented to the world through the Church, which carries out this self-giving in the sacraments. In the Celebration of the Eucharist, the self-giving of God occurs most intensively or densely because "the self-giving of God is 'formulated or expressed' by the life of Jesus, which is always loved and ultimately accepted in body and blood." The self-giving of God that is present throughout the

history of salvation and culminates through Jesus Christ is explicitly revealed or expressed most radically through the Church in the Celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, the Eucharist becomes the sacrament of God's self-giving through Christ most radically and truly in the Church for the world.

The lived experience in everyday life is concretely faced and experienced as an explanation and embodiment of the life of Christ bestowed upon Catholic believers through the Celebration of the Eucharist or Holy Mass. Daily life that continues after the Celebration of the Eucharist does not change, but daily life now becomes an extension or continuation of the life of Christ in the concrete context and situations of daily life with all its challenges and issues. Rahner expresses it as follows, "applying the meaning of the Eucharist as an everyday sacrament means that we genuinely commit ourselves to implement, experience, live, and suffer for the truth of this faith so that the truth is not only at the theological and conceptual level but also becomes a truth as our inner experience."

## CONCLUSION

Karl Rahner's sacramental theology focuses on the understanding that grace is God's self-giving. In other words, Karl Rahner wants to express that the life of all human beings is inseparable from their relationship with God. The life of human beings is the space of God's self-giving. Through the Celebration of the Eucharist, each person receives the everyday life of Jesus Christ himself, which includes his entire life, including his death. Therefore, through the Eucharist, human daily life is nothing but the life of Christ entrusted to humanity to be concretized in the joys and sorrows of the daily struggles of the faithful. By receiving holy communion, the faithful are united with Christ. The unity with the life of Christ is what the faithful continue in their daily lives, with all its joys and sorrows.

Catholic believers in the urban context need to understand that their work in society is not merely a human activity but a mission as a sign and means of God's salvation in the midst of society. The daily mass regularly attended by the faithful should be recognized as the source and summit of their lives because they live their daily lives in the light of Christ himself.

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