

Four Pillars for Building A Eucharistic Life

BY BISHOP JAMES S. WALL

“By coming to Christ in the Eucharist, then, we stand, as it were, before a divine mirror, one which shows us who we truly are. The more time we spend there before the Eucharist, the more the false things we believe are stripped away, and we are able to live and act more fully as the sons and daughters that God made us to be.”



AT THE END OF HIS PUBLIC LIFE, Jesus sent his apostles into the world to preach, teach, baptize, and share the life he had given them (see Mt 28:16–20). This is the divine model: people are called to God to be formed by him and then sent to bring others to share in that joyful life. Teachers of the faith in particular enjoy both the joys and the responsibilities of living and sharing that life.

The Church in the United States finds herself in a similar position as those first disciples in this, the final year of the Eucharistic Revival: it is the Year of Mission. After some time of diocesan and parish renewal, each of us is being charged to go

forth into the world to bring Christ to others. Having been formed in these last years by our Eucharistic prayer and study, we are now commissioned as missionaries, sent to invite others to experience the great joy of knowing and serving Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist.

In the case of those already engaged in catechetical ministry, this call will also take the form of renewing and deepening our own understanding, methods, and engagement with those whom we teach. To such an end, there are four main “pillars” proposed to us to guide our way and to help keep us stable in our pursuits of drawing people to Christ.

Pillar I: Eucharistic Encounter

The first of these pillars is Eucharistic Encounter. This pillar is meant to encourage and continue what we have been stressing this entire



revival: we need to encounter Christ in the Eucharist—we need to meet him in his presence and spend time with him. This is the start and end of all our endeavors, for the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life.”¹ As the old saying goes, *nemo dat quod non habet*; nobody gives what he doesn’t have. In other words, we cannot expect to lead people to Christ if we are not spending time with him ourselves.

Catechists can help their students to grow in this area by helping them to participate worthily and well at Holy Mass,

attending daily if possible; by going to adoration and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; and by making short visits to the tabernacle, even spiritually if you cannot do so physically. Frequent confession is a must in this area as well. Good and helpful explanations of what

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1324, quoting Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11.

participating in these sacramental realities mean will of course be necessary and will go a long way.

Pillar II: Eucharistic Identity

The second pillar of the Year of Mission is Eucharistic Identity. Here we are called to remember and fortify our true identities as sons and daughters of the Father, particularly as we relate to him in Christ through the Eucharist. The devil and the world today tell us so many lies about who we are, and we can see all around us the tragic desperation that people are led to by thinking they are something other than they are. The Gospel, on the other hand, reveals to us our truest nature and identity: we are sons and daughters of a loving God, and this was made possible by what Jesus did for us on the Cross.

For his part, Jesus always knew his identity: he was and is the Son of the Father. It was from this identity that all of his words and actions flowed, which is one of the reasons he was so convicting in all that he said and did. By his Cross and Resurrection, he extends that sonship to us. By coming to Christ in the Eucharist, then, we stand, as it were, before a divine mirror, one which shows us who we truly are. The more time we spend there before the Eucharist, the more the false things we believe are stripped away, and we are able to live and act more fully as the sons and daughters that God made us to be.

As teachers of the true faith, catechists are in a prime position to help others learn the true nature of their identity, particularly as the world tries to “catechize” our youth in so many foul and evil ways. I would especially encourage teachers of the faith to strengthen and deepen their own and their students’ relationship with the saints, for the saints are the men and women who learned who they truly are and helped others to do the same. Reading their lives is a sure way to be inspired to holiness—and to gain heavenly help along the way.

Pillar III: Eucharistic Life

In the third pillar, Eucharistic Life, we are encouraged to continue to conform our lives to Christ in every aspect so that all is laid subject to the reign of God. Just as Christ laid down his life to the Father on our behalf, so too are we meant to follow him even to the Cross so that, with him in the Eucharist, we can be offered to the Father.

The powerful words of St. Paul come to mind as guideposts here: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). He describes a Eucharistic life by telling the Corinthians to “destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete” (2 Cor 10:5–6). We can see from the apostle how radical and deep this conformity to Christ must go. We must be crucified so that even our thoughts are obedient to Christ.

This pillar seems to me of particular import for catechists, who, among other things, have a chief duty of actual catechetical instruction, which shows students what a life conformed to Christ looks like, both intellectually and in daily living. Two things come to mind as helps here. The first is to teach the faith by using the tried-

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and-true gift that the Church has given us in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. By doing so, you can help to form others’ minds, which in turn can help them to hone their entire lives. We cannot love what we do not know,

after all. Second, encourage and assist your students in carrying out corporal and spiritual works of mercy. These ensure that our study of the faith does not stay only on an intellectual level but moves into the transformation of our hearts and the bearing of good fruit in our lives.

Pillar IV: Eucharistic Mission

Finally, as the fourth pillar we have Eucharistic Mission. This fourth pillar is where the other three take on new life. It is here that all our endeavors take on an apostolic nature, one which does not hoard the great gifts of God for ourselves but desires to share those gifts with others. I assure you: every man, woman, and child is in need of Christ in the Eucharist. Not a single one of us would be without benefit from knowing Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. And yet, how many do not know him! How many have never even heard of him!

This is where, as catechists will know from personal experience, courage will be needed. It is difficult to share the faith, to extend our love of the Eucharist to others. But that is what is needed, for Christ is asking us to do so. He is sending us on his mission to be his missionaries. St. Teresa of Ávila put it this way:

Christ has no body but yours,
 No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
 Yours are the eyes with which he looks
 compassion on this world,
 Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
 Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
 Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
 Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
 Christ has no body now but yours,
 No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
 Yours are the eyes with which he looks
 compassion on this world.
 Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Pray, then, to the Holy Spirit, that he may give you the courage to be up to this task and mission. He is asking great things of you as you seek to teach and form others in our faith—but, with him, you are capable of such great things. Seek fidelity to him above all, and let him work his wonders through you.

In all this, you might consider this prophetic perspective for your catechetical work. Quite plainly, at this moment in the life of the Church in America, the Lord is asking you, as he asked the prophets of old, “Will you go for me? Will you bring my message to my people? Will you help them know my love for them? Will you tell them of the great abundance of love and mercy that I have given them in the Eucharist? *Will you go?*” All that remains is for you to answer. I pray, for the glory of God and the sake of so many souls, that you say yes.

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