

Why the Holy Eucharist?

The end or design for which Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist was that it might be the spiritual food and nourishment of our souls, to preserve and augment that life of grace which we receive in Baptism, and which is completed and perfected in Confirmation; according to the words of our Saviour, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." And, a little after, "he that eateth me, the same shall live by me." This is explained from the similitude of the natural life of our bodies; for we see, that however lively, vigorous, and strong we be as to our natural life, yet our strength will soon diminish, our vigour fail, and our life become weaker and weaker, and at last be destroyed entirely, unless it be preserved by proper food, which feeds, nourishes, and strengthens the body; so, in like manner, however lively and strong the soul be in the life of grace, which we receive in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation; yet, by reason of the corruption of our nature, and the many temptations to which we are continually exposed, from the malice of our spiritual enemies, this spiritual life would soon fail and decay, and at last be extinguished entirely by mortal sin, if we had not a proper food to support and nourish it in the soul. For this reason, our blessed Saviour was pleased to institute the sacrament of the holy Eucharist, in which, under the outward appearances of bread and wine, He gives us his precious body and blood, to feed and nourish our souls, and to preserve and augment in them the life of grace, by which we live to Him.

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"Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you." Does not Jesus still address these words to us from the Tabernacle? He who labors, needs refreshment. He who is weary, needs comfort and repose. The Holy Eucharist is at once refreshment and rest to our souls.