

Topic Page: [Lord's Supper](#)

Definition: **Eucharist** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Central act of Christian worship, in which the priest and congregation partake in Holy Communion - one of the principal sacraments. The Eucharist is a commemorative re-enactment of the Last Supper. Among Roman Catholics, the rite is also called Mass; among Protestants, it is the Lord's Supper. See *also* transubstantiation



Image from: [The Institution of the Eucharist in National Gallery Collection](#)

Summary Article: **Eucharist**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Chief Christian sacrament, in which bread is eaten and wine drunk in memory of the death of Jesus. Other names for it are the **Lord's Supper**; **Holy Communion**; the **Holy Liturgy** (Eastern Orthodox); and the **Mass** (Roman Catholicism). Roman Catholics believe that the bread and wine are transubstantiated – that is, converted to the body and blood of Jesus. The doctrine of transubstantiation was rejected by Protestant churches during the

Reformation.

The word comes from the Greek for ‘thanksgiving’, and refers to the statement in the Gospel narrative that Jesus gave thanks over the bread and the cup.

Last Supper For many Christians the Eucharist is an act of thanksgiving, and the most important act of worship. It recalls the last meal, or last supper, that Jesus took with his disciples before his arrest and crucifixion. According to the Gospels, Jesus took the bread and wine used in the meal, which celebrated Pesach (Passover), and shared them with his disciples, giving them a new meaning for Christians; in Mark 14:22–25 he gave the bread, saying that it was his body, and passed round a cup of wine, which he said was his blood, and that his blood sealed God's covenant.

The earliest account of a celebration of the Eucharist is in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26. By taking part in the Eucharist, Christians feel that they are obeying Jesus' command to do this in remembrance of him. Christians are commanded to celebrate the Eucharist until the second coming, the Parousia. They are to look forward to this second coming of Christ in Glory.

In Britain, members of the Church of England (Anglicans) are required to participate in the Eucharist at least three times a year, with Easter as one. Roman Catholic churches usually hold a daily Mass. The Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican churches celebrate the Eucharist as Jesus told his disciples to do. The elements or symbols of the Eucharist, the bread and the wine, help them feel closer to God.

Some churches do not celebrate the Eucharist at all, as they do not believe in remembering Jesus in this way. The service is not part of the worship of the Society of Friends (Quakers) or the Salvation Army.

Service ritual All denominations practising the Eucharist follow a similar ritual (pattern), which includes prayers, Bible readings, confession, and a sermon (ministry of the Word). The Eucharist may begin with the singing of hymns and psalms, and includes readings from the Old and New Testaments as well as a

Gospel reading. There are prayers of intercession (asking for God's help) and a sermon before the focal part of the service, which is the consecration, and sharing of the bread and wine.

The placing of the bread and wine onto the altar reminds the congregation of the origins of the Eucharist and the presence of the bread and wine on the table at the Last Supper. The bread is called the host, and is carried on a shallow dish known as a paten. Communion wafers are often used in place of real bread. The wine is drunk from a chalice, or cup.

After thanksgiving prayers, the 'breaking of the bread' takes place. The priest or minister blesses and consecrates the bread and wine. During the service, the priest moves to the sanctuary and stands by the altar. At the consecration, a special prayer is said over the bread and wine, and the bread is held up so that everyone can see it. In some churches, such as Roman Catholic and Anglican, consecration of the bread involves bowing, the use of incense, lifting of the bread and wine, bells, and the sign of peace. Christians greet each other with the words, 'Peace be with you.'

After the Eucharistic prayers, the priest invites the congregation to come to the altar to receive the bread and wine. In the Orthodox Church, Holy Communion is distributed to the congregation by dipping a piece of bread in wine and giving it to them on a long spoon. Baptists receive the wine in separate glasses. Roman Catholics and Anglicans (Church of England) usually receive the bread and wine while kneeling at the altar. After the 'sharing of the bread and wine', the dismissal takes place, during which the priest and congregation usually offer a prayer of thanksgiving and the priest closes the service with a blessing.

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Holy Communion

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Chicago

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