



## Helping Young People Fall In Love with Jesus in the Eucharist

by Father David Sharland, Y.A.

### I. Why bring young people to fall in love with Jesus in the Eucharist?

- Eucharist as Who, not what
- Need for relationships in our lives

### II. Ministering to youth / What young people need

(The following seven “Powers of the Eucharist” were given by Father Paul Avalone, SDB during a talk on the Eucharist during a retreat. I have expanded and adapted his original thoughts.)

**Transformation:** *Fulton Sheen speaks of levels of life; the lower being transformed into the higher...minerals absorbed by vegetation, vegetation eaten by animals, then consumed by humans. While we may consume the Eucharist, we are actually consumed by it. We take on what we have eaten, we become Christ for one another. That drop of water that I place in the chalice with the wine as I prepare the gifts? It represents our humanity being submerged into the divine.*

(Help your young people understand that they become what they consume: what they eat, drink, listen to and watch.)

**Atonement for Sins:** *This is really the purpose of the daily celebration of the Eucharist. You know, it is lamentable that so many say, “I don’t get anything out of the Mass.” Fulton Sheen would respond that perhaps we bring nothing to the Mass. I am not referring to something as simple and yet as important as full and active participation in the prayers, responses and songs of the Mass. That is too shallow. Rather, it is something much deeper. We get nothing from Mass because we fail to bring with us and open to the Lord our needs, our heart, our desires -- all that makes up who we are. We come detached from what is taking place.*

(We don’t have to do anything here. But as we participate in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, we share in Jesus’ atonement for our sins. We should come to Mass with the attitude “Here I am, Lord, with all my gifts *and* my brokenness. I give it all to You. Do with it as You wish.)

**Healing:** *Remember the centurion who felt unworthy for Jesus to enter his home. Remember our own words of prayer during this Mass: “Say but the word and my servant (my soul) shall be healed.” Recall too the Road to Emmaus. Jesus heals little by little. Their hearts were burning from the Lord’s presence with them. Then He was recognized in the breaking of the bread. All of us are wounded, in need of healing. It is the only way we can become holy.*

(Young people need to see the relationship between their own doctor and the Divine Physician, who gives them healing in the Eucharist like no earthly doctor possibly could.)

**Unity:** *Thus the word communion. In the Eucharist we are made one in Christ. Recall in the Acts of the Apostles, where they celebrated the Eucharist and were all of one heart and one mind, caring for one another.*

(Here we can make great strides to help them discover their own unique gifts, given them by the Lord, and how they are part of the Body of Christ.)

***Defense Against Evil and Temptation:*** Remember that Mary, who bore Christ in her womb, was rewarded with her blessed Assumption into heaven. We too can share in her blessings as we fill ourselves with the Bread of Life. If what fills our body and soul is good, we cannot help but become good, become holy. The priest prays silently before communion, “By your holy body and blood, free me from all my sins, and from every evil. Keep me faithful to your teaching, and never let me be parted from you.”

(This is related to the first power. It refers to the nourishment the Lord gives us, but now it can be viewed in an even more urgent and serious way. This is protection!)



***Intimacy:*** The image of the vine and the branches speak to the great intimacy of love, between us and God. John 15 reminds us that when we, the branches, remain a part of the vine, we are fed in an intimate way, like the child at her mother’s breast.

(Who do we love? Who are we close to? Why do we like spending time with them?)

***Immortality:*** We hear it right from our gospel today, in John 6:54, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.” This is how we live forever. Not with vitamins and supplements, but with the Eucharist. The Holy Father, when getting home at night, no matter what the hour, spends ½ hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Not doing his breviary, but just being still with Jesus.

(Most young people all have a sense of vibrancy and immortality. But most of the time that sense of immortality is not well founded. But we can take this sense and desire in them and draw them to the Lord.)

### **III. What else do youth need? What should they be doing?**

- The need to give thanks
- The need to serve

### **IV. How we bring them to the Eucharist**

- The Celebration of Mass
  - Teaching Mass / Instruction on the Mass
  - Involvement in the ministries of the Mass
  - Intimate settings
- Eucharistic Adoration
  - Quiet and stillness
- Sacrament of Penance
- Breaking Open the Scriptures
  - John 6*
  - Mt 26:26-28*
  - Mk 14:22-24*
  - Lk 22:17-20*
  - 1 Cor 10:14-17*
  - Lk 24:30-35*

*1 Cor 11:23-29*

*1 Cor 12:12*

- Music:
  - Songs from your hymnals
  - *Lord, I Need You* by Matt Maher
  - *What a Beautiful Name* by Hillsong
  - *Build My Life* by Housefires
  - As well as contemporary worship songs, invite your youth to sing older, more traditional hymns, such as *O Salutaris*, *Tantum Ergo*, or *Jesus My Lord, My God, My All*
- Make the connection for them. Explain how what they celebrate at Mass has meaning in what they do with their daily lives.
- Educate yourself – There are some great resources on the Eucharist to increase our knowledge. These are diverse in their approach and style:

*The Eucharist, Gift of Divine Life*, Theological-Historical Commission for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

*The Eucharist: Essence, Form, Celebration*, Johannes H. Emminghaus

*The Lamb's Supper*, Scott Hahn

*The Story of the Mass: From the Last Supper to the Present Day*, Pierre Loret

*The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, Edward Sri

*Behold the Mystery: A Deeper Understanding of the Catholic Mass*, Mark Hart

Plus, don't forget these great ecclesial documents:

[\*Catechism of the Catholic Church\*](#)

[\*Sacramentum Caritatis\*](#), Pope Benedict XVI, 2007

[\*Ecclesia De Eucharistia\*](#), Pope John Paul II, April 17, 2003

[\*Dominicae Cena\*](#), Pope John Paul II, 1980

[\*Sacrosanctum Concilium\*](#) (Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Pope Paul VI, 1963

- Share with teens about Eucharistic miracles from around the world. A resource on Eucharistic miracles created by Blessed Carlo Acutis can be found here: <http://www.miracolieucaristici.org/en/Liste/list.html>. Here is a book on Eucharistic miracles that you may find helpful: *The Eucharistic Miracles of the World (Catalogue of the Vatican International Exhibition)* presented by the Real Presence Eucharistic Education and Adoration Association, Inc.
- Catechetics (this is not a bad word). Be creative in how you teach:
  - Games, quiz-shows, etc.

*Father David is a member of the Youth Apostles, and has been doing youth ministry for over 40 years. He currently serves as the chaplain for the Catholic Campus Ministry at Virginia Tech. He serves as an advisor, counselor, and spiritual director to many college students, as well as FOCUS missionaries and numerous youth and campus ministers. For fun, Father David is a serious player in the kitchen, green thumb in the garden and a skunk whisperer.*