



EUCCHARISTIC READINGS

FOR PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN



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“The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1324)

HOW TO USE THESE READINGS:

Parents are the first educators of their children in the ways of faith and holiness. They are also called by God to be the best educators.

1. Choose a time when Mum and/or Dad can spend a quiet few minutes with the child who is preparing for First Communion
Suggestion: Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings.

2. Parent and child say a short prayer together, perhaps to the Holy Spirit: "Come Holy Spirit. Guide me to know and love Jesus ever more."

3. Parent and child can decide who reads each part of the daily reading.

4. Read each section slowly and prayerfully. Don't rush.

5. Give time for questions. Don't be afraid to explain.

6. Conclude with the brief prayer, perhaps a Hail Mary or whatever seems appropriate.

7. Perhaps conclude by blessing your child with the sign of the cross on the forehead.

8. See also www.myfirstholycommunion.com for excellent material.



Bonus Step – There is a surprise beside each reading in the form of a QR code (pictured right). Scan or click and enjoy together the content waiting for you!



"Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God."

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, Section 2226)



Nihil Obstat: Rev. Peter Joseph, S.T.D., Censor Deputatus.
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READING ONE: WHO IS JESUS?

Scripture:

"And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."

(Luke 2:7)

Reading:

Jesus is the son of Mary, and He was born at Bethlehem. Jesus was no ordinary baby. Jesus is God the Son.

There is only one God, who created everything that exists in the world and in the universe. In this One God, there are Three Persons. There is God the Father, there is God the Son, and there is God the Holy Spirit. God the Father is God. God the Son is God. And God the Holy Spirit is God.

God the Father is not God the Son, God the Son is not God the Holy Spirit. There are three distinct Persons in one God. We call this the Blessed Trinity. Trinity means three in one.

God always existed. God existed from all eternity and will always exist. God alone is uncreated. God is outside time. All time is present to God. God already knows the future.

(You and I had a beginning, but we shall have no end. We have an immortal soul. We shall live forever, with God in heaven, please God.)

God the Son came down from heaven to save us. By the power of God the Holy Spirit, Mary conceived within herself God the Son, who was born at Bethlehem. The angel Gabriel told Mary at the Annunciation and told Joseph in a dream that this most special Baby was to be called Jesus. The word 'Jesus' means 'God saves.' Jesus came to save us from sin. God loves us and wants to save us from all that could harm us.

Prayer:

O Jesus, I thank You for coming down from heaven for us. I believe that You are my Lord and my God. I love You.





READING TWO: THE NAMES OF JESUS

Scripture:

“The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.”

(Luke 1:30-31)

Reading:

The angel Gabriel told Mary that her Son was to be called Jesus. Jesus means 'God saves.'

We also call Jesus the Christ, or the Messiah, or the Anointed One.

Almost two thousand years before Jesus came, God called Abraham to be the Father of God's Chosen People, the Jewish People.

For over one thousand years, the People of Israel, the Jewish People, the Hebrew people, were waiting for Someone to come and save them.

This Person became known as the Messiah. The word Messiah is a Hebrew word, and it means the Anointed One. The Greek word for Messiah is Christos, or Christ.

According to God's plan, when the Jewish People wanted to make a person a priest or a prophet or a king, they would pour olive oil on the person's head, anointing them with the oil. For example, the shepherd David was anointed by the prophet Samuel to make him King David. (1 Samuel 16).

A Priest is a person who prays to God for his people, who brings God's blessings to his people, and who offers sacrifice to God for the sins of the people.

A Prophet is a person who speaks on behalf of God. A prophet gives messages from God to his people.

A King is a person who rules over the people. A good king acts like a shepherd who cares for his sheep, and protects them and leads them to good pasture.

So Jesus is called the **Anointed One**, because He is the great Priest, Prophet and King. We call Him Jesus Christ, that is, Jesus the Anointed One.

We also call Jesus our **Lord**, because we accept Him as our Master. And so He is Our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Prayer:

*O Jesus,
You are the
Messiah
who came
to save us.
Thank You
for loving
us so
much.*





READING THREE: OUR LORD'S GREATEST MIRACLE

Scripture:

"Jesus said to them, 'I am the Bread of Life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'"

(John 6:35)

Reading:

Our Saviour Jesus Christ worked many miracles while He was on earth.

He fed five thousand men plus women and children by multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish. He walked on water. He restored His friend Lazarus back to life. He gave sight to the blind. He cured the deaf and dumb and the paralytics (those who could not walk).

Jesus was able to do these miracles through His power as God. These were wonderful miracles, and all the people could see them. They were amazed at what they saw, and they knew that Jesus was no ordinary man.

The very greatest miracle that Jesus worked, and still works every day all over the world, is one that we cannot see with our eyes, but it is still true and the most wonderful. Jesus has arranged to stay with us through the miracle of Holy Communion, the gift of His very self. At the Last Supper, just before He was to die on the Cross, He took bread, broke it and said to His Apostles, "Take and eat. This is My Body which will be given up for you." He took the chalice, or cup, of wine and said: "Take and drink. This is My Blood which will be poured out for you."

We believe that Jesus, who is God, meant what He said. We believe that in Holy Communion we receive Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

We call these words of Jesus that the priest prays at Mass the **words of consecration**. We believe that at the consecration, the bread becomes the Body of Christ, and the wine becomes the Blood of Christ. Jesus is fully present under the appearance of bread and under the appearance of wine.

When we look at the consecrated Bread we can say with Saint Thomas: "**My Lord and my God.**" This IS Jesus.

Prayer:

*Lord Jesus,
on Your
word, I
believe
that what
You say
is true. I
adore You,
my Lord
and my
God.*





READING FOUR: WHY DO WE BELIEVE THAT HOLY COMMUNION IS JESUS HIMSELF?

Scripture:

"Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Lord, give us this bread always.'"

(John 6:32-34)

Reading:

In Chapter Six of Saint John's Gospel, we read that just the day after Jesus had fed the large crowd by the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the people came back to Jesus, hoping He would do the same miracle again.

Then Jesus gave them a teaching that some of them found very difficult to accept. Jesus said: "I am the Bread of Life... I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.... he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Many of the people who had been following Jesus found these words very hard to accept. They said to each other: "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" And from that day, many of His followers left Him and didn't come back.

Jesus knew what they were thinking and saying, but He didn't say: "I don't mean this literally. I don't really mean this the way it sounds." He meant exactly what He said and He knew that some people would not accept what He said.

And so Jesus turned to His apostles, and said to them: "Will you also go away?" And Simon Peter said to Jesus: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Simon Peter had seen Jesus' other miracles, and he believed in Jesus, and accepted what Jesus said.

This is one very good reason why we believe that in Holy Communion, it is Jesus Himself who comes to us.

There are other good reasons too, which we shall see soon.

Prayer:

*Jesus,
You are
the Bread
come
down from
Heaven to
give life to
the world.
Open our
hearts to
the life You
desire to
give us.*





READING FIVE: NAMES FOR THE EUCHARIST AND THE TABERNACLE

Scripture:

"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also the chalice, after supper, saying, 'This chalice is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"

(1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

Reading:

After the priest consecrates the bread and wine at Mass, we say that they are no longer bread and wine. They are truly Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, fully present as God and as Man. He is fully present under the appearance of bread, and fully present under the appearance of wine.

There are several names for this great gift.

We call it the **Blessed Eucharist**. The word Eucharist means thanksgiving.

We call it the **Blessed Sacrament**. The word sacrament means sacred sign.

When we speak of the **consecrated bread**, we call it the **Body of Christ**.

When we speak of the **consecrated wine**, we call it the **Blood of Christ**.

We call it **Holy Communion**. When we receive Jesus, we are in communion with Him. That is, we are in very close union, close friendship, with Him. He lives in us and we live in Him.

Sometimes we call the Body of Christ, the **Host**. The word 'host' here comes from a Latin word, hostia, which means 'victim.' Jesus is the victim offered up on the cross to make up for our sins.

Prayer:

*O Sacrament
Most Holy, O
Sacrament
Divine, all
praise and all
thanksgiving
be every
moment
Thine.*





Scripture:

"God is love, and he who lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him."

(1 John 4:16)

Reading:

When you enter a Catholic cathedral, church or chapel, you will usually see at the front of the church a red light, and near the light, there will be a container we call the **tabernacle**.

Inside the tabernacle will be the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus Himself truly present.

We call the red light the **sanctuary lamp**.

The sanctuary is the area of the church that surrounds the altar. The word 'sanctuary' comes from the Latin word 'sanctus', which means 'holy'.

The word 'tabernacle' comes from another Latin word 'tabernaculum', which means 'tent'.

In the time of Moses, long before Jesus, the tabernacle was the holy place where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, containing the Ten Commandments God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai and the manna, the flour that God sent to feed the Israelite people in the desert.

Prayer:

*Lord Jesus,
You remain
day and
night in the
tabernacle for
us. Draw my
heart to You,
so that I may
love You with
all my heart.*





READING SIX: MIRACLES OF THE EUCHARIST

Scripture:

"Jesus said to the Twelve, 'Will you also go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.' "

(John 6:66-69)

Reading:

As well as the miracle of the feeding of the Five Thousand with five loaves and two fish, God has given us many other miracles to remind us and to more deeply convince us of the truth of the Real Presence of Jesus in Holy Communion.

A miracle is something that God does, which goes beyond nature. To multiply food as Jesus did goes beyond nature. To bring Lazarus back from the dead after three days goes beyond nature. Only God can do these things. God is all-powerful, or omnipotent.

There are over one hundred and thirty miracles that God has given us, which we call Eucharistic miracles, because they all are related to the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

In about 2003, a twelve or thirteen-year-old boy, a computer genius, collected information about these miracles, and he put them on his own website, so that everybody could learn about them.

The boy is **Carlo Acutis**. Carlo died on October 12 in 2006 when he was fifteen, and on October 10 2020, Carlo was beatified, or declared Blessed, by the Catholic Church. This is the last stage before a person is canonised or declared a Saint by the Catholic Church. So now he is known as Blessed Carlo Acutis, and his feast day is on October 12.

If you want to read about these miracles, you can easily find them on the internet by typing in the name of Carlo Acutis. That will quickly take you to Carlo's own website, and to the Eucharistic Miracles.

Prayer:

Blessed Carlo Acutis, pray for me and for all young people preparing for our First Communion. May we love Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist as you did.





READING SEVEN: THE CIBORIUM AND THE MONSTRANCE

Scripture:

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

(Matthew 5:8)

Reading:

The **ciborium** (pronounced sib-or-ium) is the container often used at the altar to hold the hosts to be consecrated during Mass. The ciborium is also used to store in the tabernacle the consecrated hosts not used at Mass. The word 'ciborium' comes from the Latin word for food, which is 'cibus.' Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist is our Heavenly Food.

The **monstrance** is the container used to show the Blessed Sacrament, so that people may adore Jesus truly present upon the altar. We call this the '**exposition of the Blessed Sacrament**'. The word monstrance comes from the Latin word 'monstrare,' which means to show.



Prayer:

O Jesus, You desire to come to us as our heavenly Food. As I prepare for Holy Communion, teach me to open my heart to You. I welcome You into my heart and my soul.





READING EIGHT: DON BOSCO AND THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE COMMUNION HOSTS

Scripture:

"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

(John 6:54-55)

Reading:

The Italian priest Saint John Bosco, who is also known as Don Bosco ('Don' means 'Father'), was one day celebrating Mass for several hundred boys and young men.

When it came time to give Holy Communion to the boys, Don Bosco discovered that there were only about fifteen communion hosts in the tabernacle. The sacristan had forgotten to put out extra breads for Don Bosco to consecrate during the Mass.

Don Bosco paused, prayed to God and began to distribute Holy Communion. He gave communion to all the boys and young men, and the same number of communion hosts were in the ciborium (the Holy Communion container).

The sacristan had seen all this and knew what had happened.

After Mass, he expressed his amazement at the miracle he had just witnessed, the miracle of the multiplication of the hosts.

When he asked Don Bosco what he thought about this miracle, Don Bosco said: "This is not as great a miracle as the miracle of the consecration at every Mass."

Prayer:

Saint John Bosco, Father and Teacher of Youth, pray for us, that we may learn to visit Jesus often in the Blessed Sacrament, and so make Him our best Friend.





READING NINE: BLESSED CARLO ACUTIS

Scripture:

"Jesus spoke to them, saying: 'I am the Light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

(John 8:12)

Reading:

Carlo Acutis was born in London in 1991 and died at the age of fifteen on October 12 2006, after a short illness. His parents were Italian, and his father was a wealthy businessman. Carlo was an only child, though his mother had twins after Carlo died, and the twins are still young.

Carlo's parents moved back to Italy when Carlo was very young, and he lived the rest of his life in the city of Milan (which is known in Italy as Milano).

Carlo's parents didn't go to church very often, but his mother says that from when he was very young, when they were near a church, Carlo would ask his mother to take him in to pay a visit to Jesus.

From a young age, Carlo knew that Jesus was in the tabernacle in the church, and waiting for Carlo. When he was seven years old, he asked to be allowed to make his First Communion. The usual age for First Communion in Milan was nine, but the bishop gave Carlo special permission, and recommended that he make his First Communion in a place free from distractions. And so he made his First Communion in a monastery, where he could prepare carefully, and make a good thanksgiving after his communion.

From the day of his First Communion, Carlo went to Mass and communion every day, because he wanted to. He also prayed the rosary every day.

Carlo was a very normal, happy, popular, bright boy. He also took great interest in the poor, and used to help them as much as he could.

Prayer:

Blessed Carlo, help me to be faithful to my Sunday Mass and to the rosary.





**READING TEN:
ANTONIETTA MEO
(NENNOLINA)**

Scripture:

“Unless you become as a little child, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

(Matthew 18:3)

Reading:

A very special little girl from Italy named Antonietta Meo died of bone cancer at the very young age of six and a half in her home in the city of Rome on 3rd July, 1937. She was called by another name, just like the nicknames or pet names our parents have for us. This name by which she was affectionately known was Nennolina. Nennolina was from a fairly wealthy family and was very much loved by her parents and her sister Margherita. Her home life was happy and she was a very playful, joyful and quite a mischievous child.

At the age of three, she went to nursery school with religious sisters, and she enjoyed it immensely. The sisters told her parents that she was an intelligent child. She got on very well with all her fellow school pupils and was very popular with them due to her kindness and her personality. She also had a great sense of humour and her teachers remarked on this fact.

When she was four years old, her parents noticed a slight lump on her left knee, but put it down to her having fallen due to being so playful and active.

However, when the swelling remained, they decided to have it investigated. At the age of five, she was diagnosed with a very aggressive form of bone cancer, so the doctors decided the best course of treatment was to amputate her leg. Naturally, her parents were very upset at this as Antonietta was so young.

Nennolina bore the news and the ordeal of the amputation "cheerfully." She was fitted with a heavy artificial leg, so she was back playing with her friends in no time. Through a special grace given to her from God, she understood more than most grown-ups the true value of suffering. A nun who was a nurse at the medical clinic reported the following conversation between her and her father who asked his darling Nennolina: "Do you feel much pain?" And she answered him thus: "I am very happy that Jesus gave me this problem so that I can be His dearest one," and she added, "Daddy, the pain is like fabric, the stronger it is, the more value it has." She meant for her friend Jesus of course, as He can save souls through the sufferings of others when they are offered to Him out of love.

Reading continued:

This was a happy, though pain-filled time in her life. Just when she turned six, she went to school. Her artificial leg really began to bother her a lot. However, she was overjoyed when, at this same time, her mother began to teach her the catechism in the evenings in preparation for her First Holy Communion.

It was also now that she began to write extraordinary letters to her friend Jesus. What she couldn't write herself, she dictated to her mother, who wrote the letters for her. They were placed under the statue of Jesus in her room so He could read them during the night when she slept.

In September, 1936, Nennolina was very excited about a letter she wrote to Jesus. She told Him: "Dear Jesus, today I'm going out and I'm going to my nuns to tell them I want to make my First Holy Communion at Christmas. Jesus, come soon into my heart and I'll hug you very tight and kiss you. O, Jesus, I want you forever in my heart." Like St. Therese of Lisieux and Little Nellie of Holy God, this little Italian girl constantly told Jesus how much she loved Him, and like them, she was concerned to save souls for Him. Here is what she wrote: "My good Jesus, give me only souls, give me a lot of them, I ask you willingly. I ask you so that you can make them become good so that they can come to you in Paradise."

Nennolina talked to Jesus all the time, asking Him to accompany her to school, to help her as well as others to be good, to take her in His arms and above all, she begged Him: "Help me with your grace, help me, for without your grace, I can do nothing." She constantly prayed for her family and for others who needed her prayers.

That Christmas night, December 1936, Antonietta Meo received her first Holy Communion. It was a night of such intense joy for her, and despite her painful leg, she is reported to have spent more than an hour on her knees in prayer in her local Church.

Shortly afterwards, she received the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation. After this time, her health deteriorated rapidly and her pain was almost unbearable. Still, however, she suffered it all with remarkable heroism. She never once complained, even after she was confined totally to bed. Despite her discomfort, she never failed to pray, and the only time she

had some calm in her body was when she received Holy Communion, which the priest, at her own request, brought to her daily.

By the time she died, in the midst of terrible pain, Nennolina had written over 100 letters to Jesus, God the Father, The Holy Spirit and to the Blessed Mother.

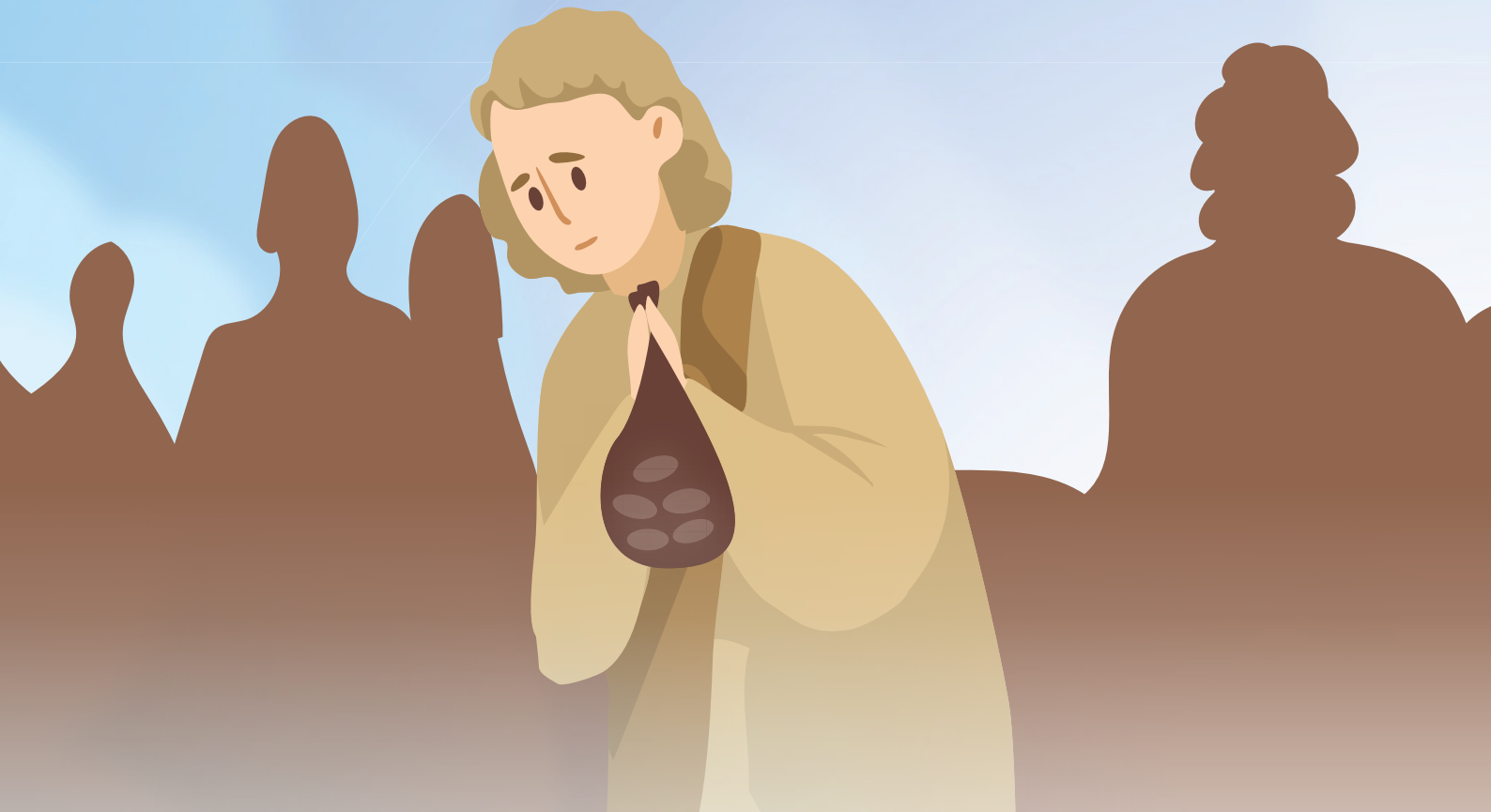
Antonieta was able to tell her mother, who was so distraught at her daughter's terrible suffering, to cheer up, and that her suffering would come to an end. She was able to give her mother the exact date of her death.

The life of this holy little girl has been examined by the Vatican and she is now known as Venerable Antonietta Meo, and her cause for sainthood is well underway.

Prayer:

*Dear
Nennolina,
pray for us
so that we
too may
generously
offer our little
sufferings to
Jesus.*





READING ELEVEN: SAINT TARCISIUS, MARTYR FOR THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Scripture:

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.'"

(John 11:25-26)

Reading:

Tarcisius was a twelve-year-old boy during one of the fierce Roman persecutions of the third century, probably during that of Emperor Valerian. Each day, from a secret meeting place in the catacombs where Christians gathered for Mass, a deacon would be sent to the prisons to carry the Eucharist to those Christians condemned to die. At one point, there was no deacon to send, so St. Tarcisius was sent carrying the “Holy Mysteries” to those in prison.

On the way, he was stopped by boys his own age who were not Christians but knew him as a playmate and lover of games. He was asked to join their games, but this time he refused, and the crowd of boys noticed that he was carrying something. Somehow, he was also recognized as a Christian, and the small gang of boys, anxious to view the Christian “Mysteries,” became a mob and turned upon Tarcisius with fury. He went down under the blows, and it is believed that a fellow Christian, a Roman soldier, drove off the mob and rescued the young lad.

The mangled body of Tarcisius was carried back to the catacombs, but the boy died on the way from his injuries. He was buried in the cemetery of St. Callistus, and his relics are kept in the church of San Silvestro in Capite.

Prayer:

*Saint
Tarsisius,
help us to be
courageous
and faithful
in our love
for Jesus in
the Blessed
Eucharist.*





READING TWELVE: SAINT CLARE SAVES ASSISI THROUGH THE EUCHARIST

Scripture:

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

(Matthew 5:9)

Reading:

Saint Clare is, with Saint Francis of Assisi, the founder of the religious order known as the Poor Clares.

In 1240, an army of soldiers from Emperor Frederick II arrived to attack the city of Assisi. St. Clare lived in Assisi with the sisters of her newly formed religious order at the time. St. Clare—while very ill—went out to meet the soldiers with the Blessed Sacrament in her hands. She placed the Blessed Sacrament on the wall where the invaders could see it. She then fell to her knees and begged God to save her sisters. It is said that she prayed:

“O Lord, protect these Sisters whom I cannot protect now.” A voice seemed to answer: “I will keep them always in My care.”

The attackers were then filled with fear and fled from the town as fast as they could without hurting anyone.

Prayer:

*Saint Clare,
help us to
have your
courage and
faith in the
power of
Jesus in the
Eucharist.*





READING THIRTEEN: SAINT DOMINIC SAVIO'S FIRST COMMUNION

Scripture:

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

(John 15:12)

Reading:

Dominic Savio was a student at Don Bosco's school in Turin, Piedmont, in Northern Italy. He was born in Chieri on April 2, 1842, the eldest of the children of Charles, a blacksmith, and his wife, Brigida Savio. Dominic died on March 9, 1857, just a few weeks short of his fifteenth birthday.

Dominic was canonised a saint in 1954. He was the youngest non-martyr saint ever canonised. Don Bosco wrote the life of Dominic Savio, to encourage his fellow students to imitate him in his holiness of life.

This is what St. Don Bosco wrote about Dominic's First Communion day:

St Dominic Savio, Chapter 3, The Greatest Day

Dominic was ready for his First Holy Communion. He knew the little catechism by heart. He had a clear understanding of this lofty sacrament, and he was most anxious to receive it. Only his age was against him, because in country parishes, children are not allowed to receive Communion until they are eleven or twelve. Dominic was only seven and small for his age, so that the chaplain hesitated and sought the advice of other priests. In view of the lad's precocious knowledge, his preparation and evident desire, he put all difficulties aside and allowed the boy to partake for the first time of the "bread of angels."

It is impossible to describe the feelings of holy joy that flooded Dominic's heart at the news. He rushed home to tell his mother. Then he prepared himself with prayer and reading; he spent a good deal of time in church before and after Mass. His soul seemed to be already living with the angels. The night before his Communion, he went up to his mother and told her: "Tomorrow, I am going to make my First Communion, mother. I'm sorry for all the trouble I've given you. I promise to do better and study hard and be obedient. I'll be docile and respectful to your wishes." Tears welled up in his eyes. Brigid, who had received nothing but comfort from her son, was deeply moved herself and, restraining her tears, comforted him. "Don't worry, Dominic, all is forgiven. Ask God to keep you good always and pray always for daddy and me."

Reading continued:

The morning of that memorable day, Dominic was up early. He put on his best suit and went to church. Since it was closed, he knelt as usual on the steps and prayed until the other children arrived and the church was opened. The entire ceremony, including penance, preparation and thanksgiving after Communion, lasted five hours. Dominic was the first to arrive and the last to leave. All during that time, he scarcely knew whether he was in heaven or on earth.

That day was the most memorable of his life. It can be called the beginning, or rather the continuation, of a life which may well serve as a model for all good Christians. Years later, when he spoke of his First Communion, his face would light up brightly with joy, and he would exclaim: "For me that was the best day — it was a great day!"

He jotted down some resolutions, which he carefully kept in a prayer book and often read. I have seen them myself and here write them down in their original simplicity:

Resolutions which I, Dominic Savio, took at the age of seven, on my First Communion day, 1849.

1. I will go to Confession often and receive Communion as often as my confessor allows;
2. I will keep feast days holy;
3. My friends shall be Jesus and Mary;
4. Death but not sin.

These resolutions, which he often repeated, were the guiding rule of his entire life.

If any of my readers has not yet made his First Communion, I would strongly urge him to take young Savio as his model. I very earnestly advise parents and those who teach children to give this act of worship the utmost importance. Be assured that First Communion lays the solid moral foundation of an entire life. It would be strange indeed

to find a person who had made a good First Communion and then had not led a life of virtue and goodness. Instead, we can find thousands of unruly boys who are the despair of their parents and teachers, and, if we go to the root of the matter, we shall find it all began with a neglected or badly prepared First Communion. It is better to postpone First Communion, even not make it at all, than to make it badly.

Life of Dominic Savio, written by St John Bosco (Don Bosco Publications, New Rochelle, NY, 1979), pp 33-35.



Prayer:

Saint Dominic Savio, you learned at the school of Don Bosco to tread the path of holiness in your youth. Pray for us, that we may prepare to receive Jesus worthily on our First Communion Day.





READING FOURTEEN: THE EUCHARISTIC MIRACLE OF LANCIANO

Scripture:

Jesus said to Thomas: "You believe because you have seen. Blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe."

(John 20:29)

Reading:

Between 730 and 750AD, in an ancient Roman town east of Rome now known as Lanciano, a certain priest, a Basilian monk, was celebrating Mass. An ancient document described him as versed in the sciences of the world but ignorant in that of God. It seems that he doubted the truth about transubstantiation, about the bread and wine becoming Our Lord's Body and Blood at the consecration in the Mass.

On this particular day, when the monk pronounced the words of consecration, the host was miraculously changed into flesh and the wine into blood. The monk was awestruck. Weeping joyously, he regained his composure. He called the congregation around the altar and said, "O fortunate witnesses, to whom the Blessed God, to confound my unbelief, has wished to reveal Himself visible to our eyes! Come, brethren, and marvel at our God, so close to us. Behold the Flesh and Blood of our Most Beloved Christ." Those who witnessed the miracle soon spread the news throughout the surrounding area.

In 1970 Pope Paul VI permitted scientific studies of the Eucharist, which has been preserved since the time of the miracle.

The study confirmed that the flesh and blood were of human origin. The flesh was unequivocally cardiac tissue, and the blood was of type AB.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, because You have said so, I believe that You are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. I adore You as my God, and I believe in You who are Truth.





READING FIFTEEN: BLESSED CARLO ACUTIS

Scripture:

"Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.'"

(John 10:11)

Reading:

Carlo Acutis was a computer genius. When he was twelve, he asked his mother and father to take him around Europe, so he could collect information about the different Eucharistic miracles. Some of them had happened centuries before, and some more recently.

Carlo collected the information, and put it all together on his website on the internet. There are 130 miracles on the website from many different countries.

Carlo could not understand why there were so many people at football matches, and so few at church. He knew that the most wonderful gift of God was to be found in the Catholic churches, in the tabernacle.

After Mass, Carlo would stay behind in silence, on his knees for some minutes, in adoration of Our Lord.

Jesus was truly Carlo's best Friend, and he wanted others to discover what he knew. On his website, he taught other young people how to become holy.

One of his famous sayings was: God makes all of us originals, and many people end up as photocopies.

Prayer:

*Blessed Carlo,
help me to become just the person God created me to be.
Help me not to worry about what other people think. Teach me to seek to please Jesus in all things.*





READING SIXTEEN: THE GENUFLECTION

Scripture:

"Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

(Philippians 2:10-11)

Reading:

When we come into a Catholic church anywhere in the world, we will almost always find a tabernacle, with Our Lord truly present in the Blessed Sacrament.

We acknowledge Jesus truly present in a special way by our **genuflection** as we enter and leave our pew. Facing the tabernacle, we go down on our right knee, as an expression of our adoration and our love for Our Lord.

It is important that this act of genuflection reflect what is in our heart. And so we do it consciously and reverently, as a prayerful act, and can at the same time make a prayer in our heart to Jesus truly present. "My Jesus, I adore You." "Jesus, I love You." "Jesus, I thank You for being here for me today." "Jesus, I believe that You are my God, truly present in the tabernacle."

The word 'genuflection' comes from two Latin words. 'Genu' means 'knee,' and 'flectere' means 'to bend.'

Prayer:

Jesus, I thank You for being present in all the tabernacles throughout the world.





READING SEVENTEEN: PADRE PIO

Scripture:

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.'"

(John 14:6)

Reading:

Padre Pio was born in southern Italy in 1887, and died on September 23, 1968. He was a Franciscan friar and priest, one of the most amazing people who ever lived, and a great saint. He is now Saint Pio, and his feast day is September 23.

For fifty years, Padre Pio carried the wounds of Jesus on his body; in his hands, on his feet, and in his chest. We call them the stigmata. Scientists examined them many times, and were unable to explain them. They healed up the day before Padre Pio died.

Padre Pio had many miraculous gifts from God. Many people were miraculously healed through his prayers. He knew the consciences of people who came from all over the world to go to Confession to him. He had knowledge of many things from afar, by the grace of God.

Padre Pio deeply understood that the Mass is the making present of Our Risen Lord's saving death. He loved Jesus very much in the Blessed Eucharist. This was the centre of his life.

Padre Pio used to say: **"May your last Holy Communion be as pure as your first."**

Prayer:

*Padre Pio,
help us to
understand
the holiness
of the Mass
as you did.*





READING EIGHTEEN: THE VISIT TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Scripture:

"The disciples asked, 'Lord, where do you live?' Jesus said, 'Come and see.'"

(John 1:38-39)

Reading:

Saint John Bosco used to say to his students: "If you want many graces from God, visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament often. If you want few graces from God, visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament seldom."

We drop into the church to pray to Jesus, to spend quiet time with Him, to rest with Him, to adore Him truly present in the tabernacle, or during exposition in the monstrance.

St Alphonsus Ligouri wrote: "Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us."

Pope Saint John Paul II said to us: "The worship of the Eucharist outside of the Mass is of inestimable value for the life of the Church... It is pleasant to spend time with him, to lie close to his breast like the Beloved Disciple and to feel the infinite love present in his heart."

Prayer:

Jesus, I thank You for being present in all the tabernacles throughout the world.





READING NINETEEN: SAINT JOHN BOSCO'S FIRST COMMUNION

Scripture:

"Do you not know that you are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells in you."

(St Paul, 1 Corinthians 3:16)

Reading:

Saint John Bosco's father died when John was two years of age. His mother, Mamma Margaret, was an excellent teacher in the Faith. Years later, Don Bosco recalled his own First Communion day, and his mother's help in preparing him for that most important of days.

Don Bosco wrote: "My mother helped me for days at a time. At home, she saw to it that I said my prayers and read good books, and she always came up with the advice which a diligent mother knows how to give to her children. On the morning of the first communion itself, she did not let me speak to anyone. She accompanied me to the altar and together we made our preparation and thanksgiving... On that day she did not wish me to do any manual work, but spend the time in reading and praying..."

Mamma Margaret said to John: "My dear son, this is a great day for you. I am convinced that God has really taken possession of your heart. Now promise him to be good as long as you live. Go to communion frequently in the future, but beware of sacrilege." ... I treasured my mother's advice and tried to carry it out. I think that from that day onwards there was some improvement in my life, especially in matters of obedience and submission to others, though I found that very hard at first." (*From Don Bosco's Memoirs of the Oratory, English edition, pp 32-33*)

Don Bosco's mother was declared Venerable by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006.

Prayer:

O Jesus, I thank you for my mother and father who teach me about you. Bless them and make them holy.





READING TWENTY: POPE PIUS X AND HOLY COMMUNION

Scripture:

"Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

(St Paul, I Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Reading:

Pope Pius X (Pius the Tenth) was pope from 1903 till 1914. When he became pope, young people normally had to wait until they were twelve years of age before they were able to receive their First Communion.

Pope Pius X wanted young people to make their First Communion as soon as they were able to understand the difference between bread and the Body of Christ. He wanted them to be able to receive Jesus so that He could come into their hearts and strengthen them to stay good.

Pope Pius X used to say: "Holy Communion is the shortest and safest way to Heaven. There are others: innocence, for instance, but that is for little children. Penance, but we are afraid of it. Generous endurance of the trials of life, but when they come we weep and ask to be spared. The surest, easiest, shortest way is by the Eucharist."

Prayer:

*O Jesus,
I greatly
desire that
You come to
me. Help me
on my way
to heaven
through this
holy Food.*





READING TWENTY ONE: SAINT THERESE OF LISIEUX

Scripture:

"Unless you become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

(Matthew 18:3)

Reading:

Thérèse Martin was a little girl who lived in France. She was the youngest in her family and was loved dearly by her older sisters and her parents. Her father used to call her, "my little queen."

Even as a little girl, Thérèse understood how special the Mass and Holy Communion are. She knew that Jesus was really present in the Host. If someone else in the family had been to Mass, she would run to the door with happiness when they came home because she knew they were carrying Jesus inside them.

One day, when Thérèse was very little, her sister Celine, who was four years older said: "How can God be present in a small Host?" Thérèse answered, "God is all-powerful." Celine said, "What does all powerful mean?" and Thérèse answered, "It means He can do what He wants!"

When she was four years old, her mother died, and Thérèse decided that her big sister Pauline would be her new mother. Pauline taught her how to pray to God in the morning and how to read and write. She loved learning about God. Every afternoon, she went for a walk with her Daddy and they visited a different church each day to pray to Jesus, who is present in the tabernacle.

One day, when Thérèse was six, she was walking with her Daddy and saw a poor man. She felt sorry for him and remembered being told that on her First Holy Communion day, all her prayers would be granted, so she said to herself, "I'll pray for this poor man the day of my First Communion." And she really did remember to do that!

At long last, Thérèse was old enough to prepare for her own First Holy Communion. The last few months before her big day was a very happy time for her. Every day she would say little prayers to Jesus. Her big sister Pauline was a nun by that time, and she wrote letters to Thérèse to help her prepare.

Reading continued:

During these months, Thérèse would often go and hide behind her bed just to think about God and heaven. She listened very carefully to the talks given to the children by the priest, and she even wrote down some things that he said so she wouldn't forget. The evening before her First Holy Communion, Thérèse was able to make her first confession and she felt very happy and even asked all her family to forgive her for any time she hurt them.

Thérèse called her First Holy Communion day "The beautiful day of days," and even years later she remembered so many things about that special day, like all the white dresses of the children, and their procession into the church singing a hymn. Of course, the most special moment of that day was when Thérèse received Jesus in Holy Communion. She said it was like a kiss from Jesus, a kiss of love. She felt that she was loved by Him and she said in her heart to Jesus: "I love you and I give myself to you forever." She always knew that she was weak and small, as she was the youngest in her family, but at that moment, Thérèse suddenly felt so united to Jesus that she felt His strength with her.

When she was older, Thérèse said that when she was preparing to receive Holy Communion, she asked Mother Mary to help, and to bring all the angels and saints also, so that there would be a big concert to welcome Jesus! She believed that Jesus is happy when He is welcomed properly. But, of course, sometimes Thérèse was sleepy or distracted, and when this happened, she tried to remember to talk to Jesus and thank Him later in the day.

When she was fifteen, Thérèse became a Carmelite nun. But after only nine years at the convent, she got very sick and died. After she died, people prayed to her because they knew how much she loved Jesus. People asked Thérèse to help them with problems or ask God to cure them of sickness, and many miracles happened. So Thérèse became a very popular saint, and lots of people pray to her today. You can see a statue or picture of her in many churches. Thérèse knew how

important it is to prepare well for Holy Communion, so during your own time of preparation, why not ask her to help you love Jesus and to talk with Him, just like she did!



Prayer:

*Saint
Therese, you
taught us
to do little
things with
great love.
Help us to
prepare for
our First
Communion
as you did.*





READING TWENTY TWO: PREPARATION BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION

Scripture:

Jesus said: "You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world."

(Matthew 5:13-14)

Reading:

1. The Eucharistic Fast: For one hour before Holy Communion, we take no food or drink (except water). We call this the Eucharistic fast. To fast means to go without food.

If necessary, we may take medicine. This does not 'break the fast.'

2. We try to always come to church several minutes before Mass starts, so that we may make our personal, prayerful preparation.

In this personal prayer time, we talk to Jesus in the tabernacle, thanking Him, asking Him for help and praising Him. We especially ask Him for help to take part well in the Mass and receive Him with great love.

3. Prayer books or missals can be a very big help to us.

4. Confession, the sacrament of Penance, can be a very good way to prepare for Holy Communion. Confession is only necessary before Communion for a person who has committed big sins, mortal sins. Confession is not necessary before Communion for those who have committed small sins, venial sins. However, regular confession is a good practice to help us on our path of holiness.

5. Sick people don't have to fast before Holy Communion.

Prayer:

O Jesus, I believe that You want to come to me because You love me. Help me to always receive You with great love.





READING TWENTY THREE: THANKSGIVING AFTER HOLY COMMUNION (1)

Scripture:

"Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."

(St Paul, I Corinthians 16:13-14)

Reading:

1. After Holy Communion, Jesus is present within us sacramentally for about ten minutes. So this is the most precious time of all. We should give Jesus our whole-hearted attention during this time. We spend this time with Him. We don't worry about anyone else. We don't allow ourselves to be distracted by anyone else. Saint Teresa of Avila tells us that this precious time is time to 'do business' with Jesus. That is, it is time to seriously meet Him and tell Him all we would like to tell Him, pour out our heart to Him, ask Him for our needs and the needs of our loved ones.

2. We call this our **Thanksgiving** time. So we also especially thank Him for His many blessings.

Saint Mary Magdalene de Pazzi says: "The minutes that follow Communion are the most precious we have in our lives."

Saint Alphonsus de Liguori says: "There is no prayer more agreeable to God, or more profitable to the soul than that which is made during the thanksgiving after Communion."

Prayer:

Jesus, may I always be grateful for all You have done for me, especially Your suffering for me.





READING TWENTY FOUR: THANKSGIVING AFTER HOLY COMMUNION (2)

Scripture:

"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find."

(Matthew 7:7)

Reading:

1. Prayer books can be very helpful to us after Holy Communion. We can pray using some of the beautiful prayers composed as Prayers after Communion.
2. We can talk to Jesus using our own words, just speaking to Him from our heart and being quiet, allowing Him to speak to us in the silence of our heart.
3. Here is a simple way to guide us in our own prayer. Take the word FATHER. Now take each letter of the word, one at a time. Each letter can remind us of a different type of prayer that we can make to Jesus.
 - a) **F** - for Faith. Jesus, I believe in You. Talk to Him about your faith.
 - b) **A** - for Adoration. Jesus, You are my God. I adore You as my God.
 - c) **T** - for Thanksgiving. Find different blessings for which to thank Jesus.
 - d) **H** - for Hope. Hope means believing in His promises. Place your hope in Jesus.
 - e) **E** - for Entreat, which means to ask. Ask Jesus for blessings for you and others.
 - f) **R** - for Resolve, which means to decide. Resolve to do something for Jesus.

Prayer:

Jesus, You send me to others. Help me to love them as You love them.





READING TWENTY FIVE: SAINT MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

Scripture:

"Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful."

(St Paul, I Corinthians 13:4)

Reading:

Saint Maximilian Kolbe was a Polish Franciscan priest. During the Second World War, he was imprisoned in the Auschwitz concentration camp.

One day some prisoners escaped, and, to punish them, the Nazis lined up all the prisoners, and pulled out every tenth prisoner to put them in the starvation bunker.

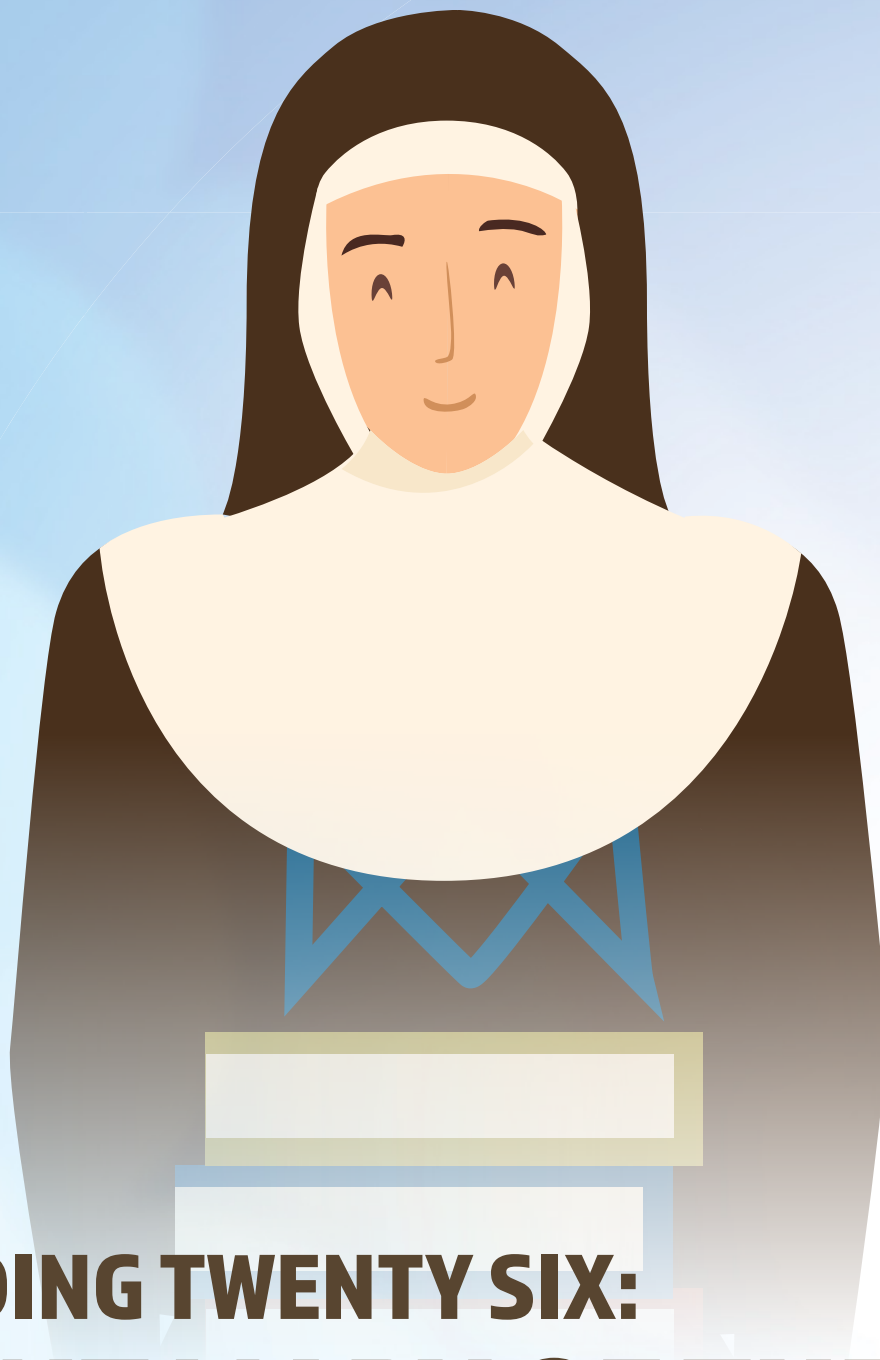
One of the prisoners pulled out for execution, the father of a family, began to cry. Saint Maximilian Kolbe stepped forward, and offered to take his place. And so he died in place of the other man, who later came to Father Kolbe's canonisation ceremony.

Maximilian Kolbe said: "If the angels could be jealous of men, they would be so for one reason: Holy Communion." Holy Communion is the greatest possible gift God could give to us, because it is the gift of Jesus Himself.

Prayer:

Saint Maximilian, teach us to live for others as you did, especially in our family.





READING TWENTY SIX: SAINT MARY OF THE CROSS MACKILLOP

Scripture:

"Let the little children come to me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

(Mark 10:14)

Reading:

Mary MacKillop is Australia's first canonised saint. She is now known as Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop.

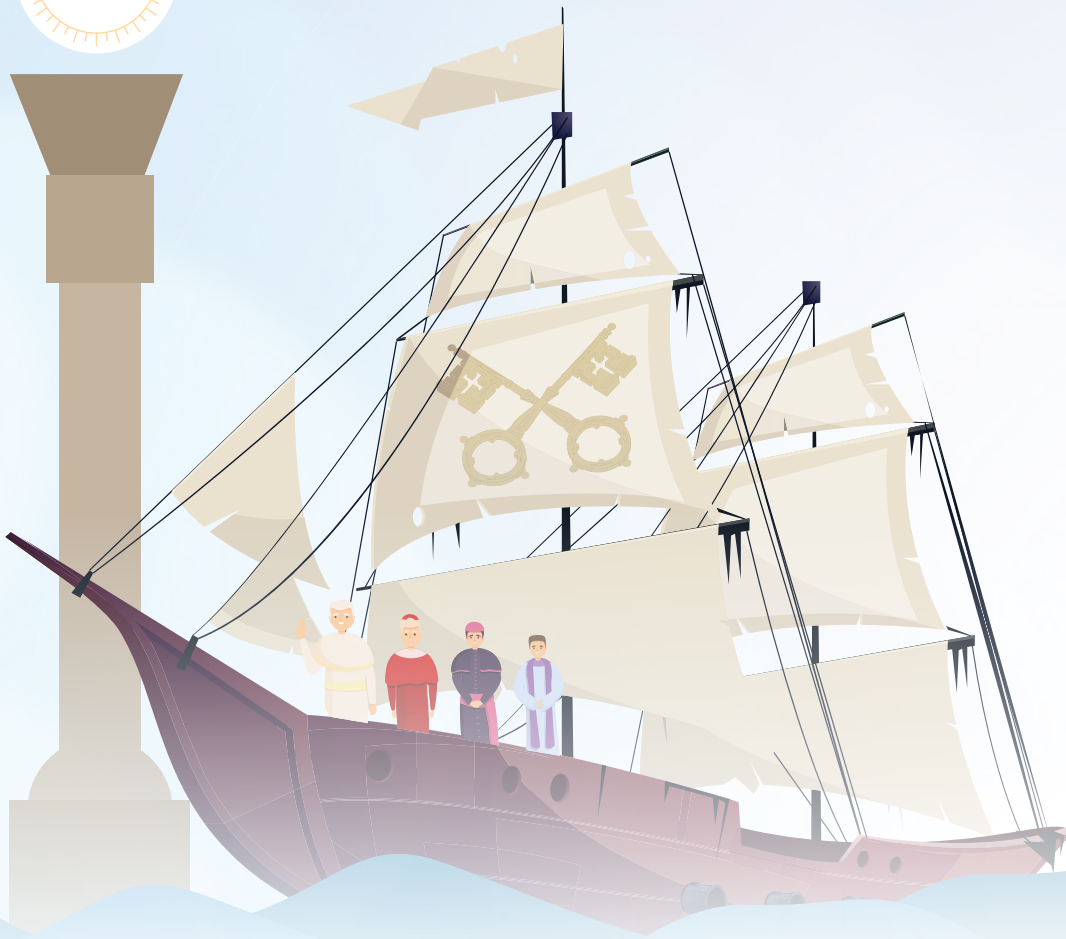
Mary was born in Melbourne in 1842 and died in Sydney in 1909. She started the Sisters of Saint Joseph, the Josephite Sisters, to help educate young people all over Australia, and especially the poorer young people.

Mary's Josephite Sisters say that "Mary loved nothing better than to be in the presence of her Lord, and invited her Sisters to do likewise. Mary spent many hours in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, and frequently paid visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, both before and after she became a Sister of Saint Joseph."

Prayer:

Saint Mary of the Cross, you lived in our land and you understand us. Pray for us to God that we may love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament as you did.





READING TWENTY SEVEN: DON BOSCO'S DREAM OF THE TWO PILLARS

Scripture:

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

(Matthew 5:7)

Reading:

Through dreams and visions, God revealed many things to Saint John Bosco, about the future or about lessons for the Church and especially for young people.

One night Don Bosco dreamt that the Pope and some bishops were on a ship being attacked by many other boats.

The Pope brought his boat between two pillars. On top of one pillar was the Eucharist, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; and on top of the other pillar was Mary, the Help of Christians. When the Pope's ship arrived between the two pillars, the ship became safe from all attack.

This dream taught the young people that Jesus in Holy Communion and Mary are our protection and the protection of the Church in the dangers and trials of our life.

Prayer:

*Lord Jesus,
protect me
from all harm.
Mary, Help
of Christians,
come to the
aid of all who
suffer.*





READING TWENTY EIGHT: TRANSUBSTANTIATION

(For an excellent presentation of the idea of transubstantiation, see the e-book by Monsignor Raffaello Martinelli, pages 92-100)



Reading:

At the wedding feast of Cana, Jesus changed water into wine. He showed us that He has power to transform things.

In the Eucharist, Jesus changes the reality of bread and wine into the reality of His own Body and Blood.

After the Consecration, the bread is no longer bread. It is now the Body of Christ.

After the Consecration, the wine is no longer wine. It is now the Blood of Christ.

Jesus is fully present under the appearance of bread – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

Jesus is fully present under the appearance of wine – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

The appearances of bread and wine remain, but there is a change of reality, a change of substance.

Jesus is fully present in whole and in part. He is fully present in the Host, and in a small part of the Host. He is fully present in the consecrated wine in the chalice, and in each drop of consecrated wine.

The physical and chemical qualities remain after the Consecration, but now it is Jesus Christ Himself, and it remains Jesus Christ as long as the qualities, the species, of bread and wine remain.

This change of reality is sometimes called **transubstantiation**, to express this most wonderful of all Our Lord's miracles. 'Trans' means across; there is a change of substance, a change of reality.

Prayer:

*Lord Jesus,
give me the
supernatural
gift of faith
to see You
as You truly
are in the
Blessed
Eucharist and
to receive
You more
deeply into
my soul.*





**READING TWENTY NINE:
LITTLE LI – CHINA'S
PRECIOUS GIRL MARTYR
OF THE EUCHARIST**

Reading:

Every now and then, great people walk the earth; people who make a powerful contribution to humanity. These people come from all walks of life and, quite often, they reveal that their real gift was inspired by an experience they had of someone else, whose words or heroic deeds touched them so profoundly that their lives took on a direction they may not otherwise have chosen.

Such a person was the late great American Bishop, Archbishop Fulton Sheen, who is now on the way to becoming a saint of the Catholic Church. For the entire sixty years of his priesthood, Archbishop Sheen never failed to make a daily holy hour before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. His life, particularly his programme "Life is Worth Living" that featured on American Television each week, touched the lives of over thirty million Americans – Catholics, Protestants and even many of those who professed to have no Faith at all.

The Archbishop had been deeply inspired by the story of two heroic young girls, both of whom had a deep and profound love for Jesus in the Eucharist. One of these young girls is St. Therese of Lisieux, known as the Little Flower, whose story is told under Young Saints of the Eucharist on this website (located at the end of this story). Bishop Sheen wrote lovingly about Therese in a book called "A Treasured Love Story," in which he also refers to a little Chinese girl martyr.

When the Archbishop was interviewed on national television a few months before his death, he was asked: " Bishop Sheen, you have inspired millions of people all over the world. Who inspired you? Was it a Pope?"

The answer took many by surprise. Bishop Sheen responded that it was not a Pope, a cardinal, another bishop, or even a priest or a nun. "The one who inspired me was a little Chinese girl." Just imagine, a little girl whose love for Jesus in the Eucharist so impressed him, that Archbishop Sheen promised God he would make a holy hour of prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every day of his life.

Reading continued:

The story of this brave little girl, Li, brings us back to the early 1950's, to Communist China where God was not allowed to be mentioned and people who practised their belief in Him were either imprisoned, tortured or killed by the ruling political class who were all Communists. Sr. Emmanuel wrote beautifully about her in the story she penned "The Amazing Story of Little Li," in her book *The Hidden Child*, and here, slightly adapted is her account of what happened. Also included is some information from other translations, inserted to help understand the background to the martyrdom of Little Li.

The Tiny Steps of a Child

In a parochial school, children diligently recited their prayers. Their teacher, Sr. Euphrasia was pleased because two months ago, many of the children had received their First Holy Communion, and took it very seriously; from the bottom of their hearts. The children were used to eating rice morning, noon and evening so little 10 year old Li asked her why Jesus didn't say "Give us this day our daily rice?" Sister smiled but she understood why this was difficult for them.

"Well, it's that 'bread' that means 'Eucharist,'" answered Sister Euphrasia. She explained that we need rice for the body, but that in asking for daily bread we are really asking for Holy Communion. This is the food for the soul and this bread is the Bread of Life.

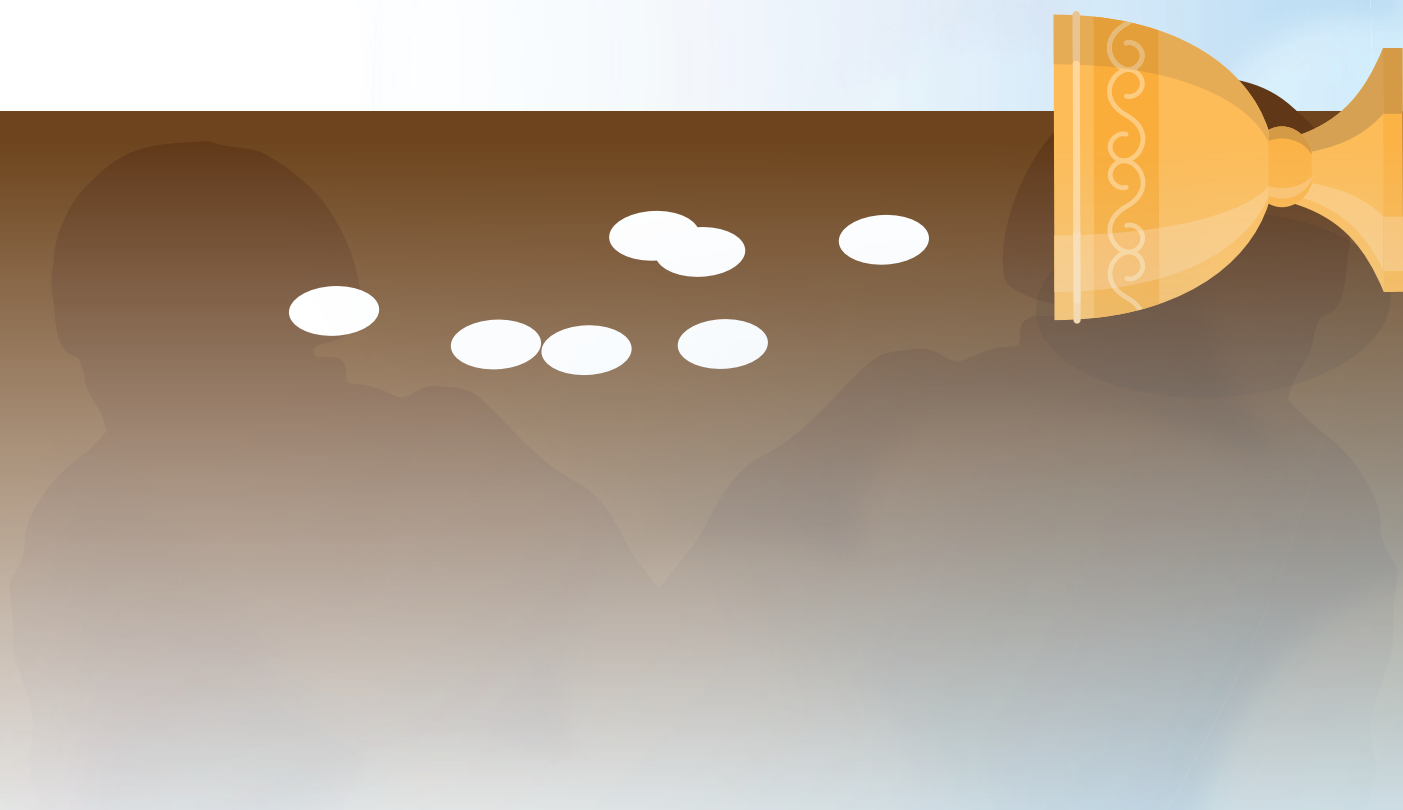
In May 1953, when Li made her First Communion, she had asked Jesus in her heart: "always give me that daily bread so that my soul can live and be healthy!" Since then, Li received Holy Communion every day, but she was aware that the Communists who didn't believe in God would not like this and they could stop the Mass at any time. She asked Jesus to make sure this would never happen.

It did happen however!

She would never forget the day these men entered the classroom and screamed at the children demanding that they hand over any holy objects they had. The terrified children gave up their carefully hand-painted pictures of Jesus, Mary and the Saints. Then in a fit of anger, their Inspector pulled the Crucifix off the wall, threw it down on the ground and trampled on it screaming: "The New China will not tolerate these grotesque superstitions!"

Little Li, who loved her picture of the Good Shepherd so much, attempted to hide it in her blouse. It was the special image given to her for her First Holy Communion. But a loud slap on her cheek sent her crashing to the floor. The Inspector called Li's father and humiliated him before the children.

That same day, the police made a sweep of the village, and crammed all the inhabitants into the tiny church. The Inspector ridiculed their beliefs and he told them they were tricked into believing that God is present in the tabernacle. The people watched with disbelief, as with a thundering voice, he ordered the soldiers to fire at the tabernacle. All together the people began to pray intensely because their Jesus was in the tabernacle.



Reading continued:

In front of all them, he grabbed the ciborium and threw all the Sacred Hosts onto the tile floor. Stunned, the faithful turned their gaze away from this awful man and the sacrilegious act he had just carried out, all the time trying to hold back their tears. Little Li froze in horror.

Her innocent and righteous little heart bled for the Sacred Hosts strewn all over the ground. "Isn't anyone going to help Jesus?" she wondered in amazement. The Captain continued his tirade of insults, interrupting his blasphemy only to let out his horrible laughter. Li wept silently.

"Now get out!" the inspector yelled. "And woe to anyone who returns to this den of superstition! He'll answer to me!" Before they left, the Communists locked the priest in the large coal bunker in the church, where a small opening helped him to see through to the sanctuary where the Hosts lay strewn on the floor.

The church quickly emptied. When the Communists left, however, they did not pay any attention to the small girl who remained praying in the Church. It was Little Li. As well as Li, there were the angels who are always present around Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to adore Him, and also there was Father Luke who observed, through the opening in his bunker, a beautiful, well dressed woman come into the church. She approached the little girl and comforted her, asking her if she would like to leave now with her. Li was very glad to do so and she broke into tears before they both left.

One month previously, foreseeing the takeover of the village, the parishioners had asked Father Luke, their priest from the Foreign Missions, to be careful. The soldiers appeared to have forgotten all about him when they left.

There was little the priest could do. However, feeling very upset at what had happened, there was still one thing he could do. He sank into prayers of atonement for the sacrileges committed against Jesus and suffered because he was not able to come to Jesus' defence.

He prayed in anguish, "Stop this sacrilege! Lord Jesus!" Father hardly noticed the length of time he spent imprisoned. However, he did notice the arrival on the next day of the little girl who very silently came into the church. Slowly, she made her way into the sanctuary and it was then that Father Luke saw her. He trembled: she could be killed at any moment! Unable to communicate with her, he could only watch and beg all the saints in Heaven to protect this child. He observed as she bowed for a moment and adored in silence, just as she had been taught to do in school.

Little Li stayed with Jesus in adoration for one whole hour, knowing that she was supposed to prepare her heart before receiving Him. Her hands joined together, she whispered a prayer to her Jesus who was so mistreated and abandoned. Father Luke never took his eyes off the young girl, and he continued to observe her as she lowered herself down on her knees, bent over, and with her tongue, took up one of the Hosts. She then remained there on her knees, eyes closed and in deep joy at having her Heavenly Friend within her.

Each second seemed an eternity to Father Luke. If only he could speak to her! However, his fear was gone when the young girl, with a gentle spring in her step, left the church quietly and unnoticed.

Meanwhile, the Communists searched the entire village to rid it of anything holy, and this type of purging was going on right throughout the "New China." The villagers stayed quietly and in fear in their bamboo homes and were terrified to venture out. Yet, every morning, Little Li slipped away to find her Living Bread in the church. As on the first day, she repeated the same routine of spending one holy hour in adoration of her Friend Jesus. As before, she then took up one Host with her tongue and disappeared quietly. Father Luke, concerned for her safety, couldn't understand why she didn't take more than one. He knew exactly how many Hosts had been in the ciborium: there were thirty-two of them and surely she would be seen if she came in each of those days?

But Li didn't do that, as Sister had taught the children they could have only one Host per day and they were never to touch it except with the

Reading continued:

tongue. The little girl kept to all she had been taught because she knew just how precious the Host was: it was Jesus Himself really and truly present in it.

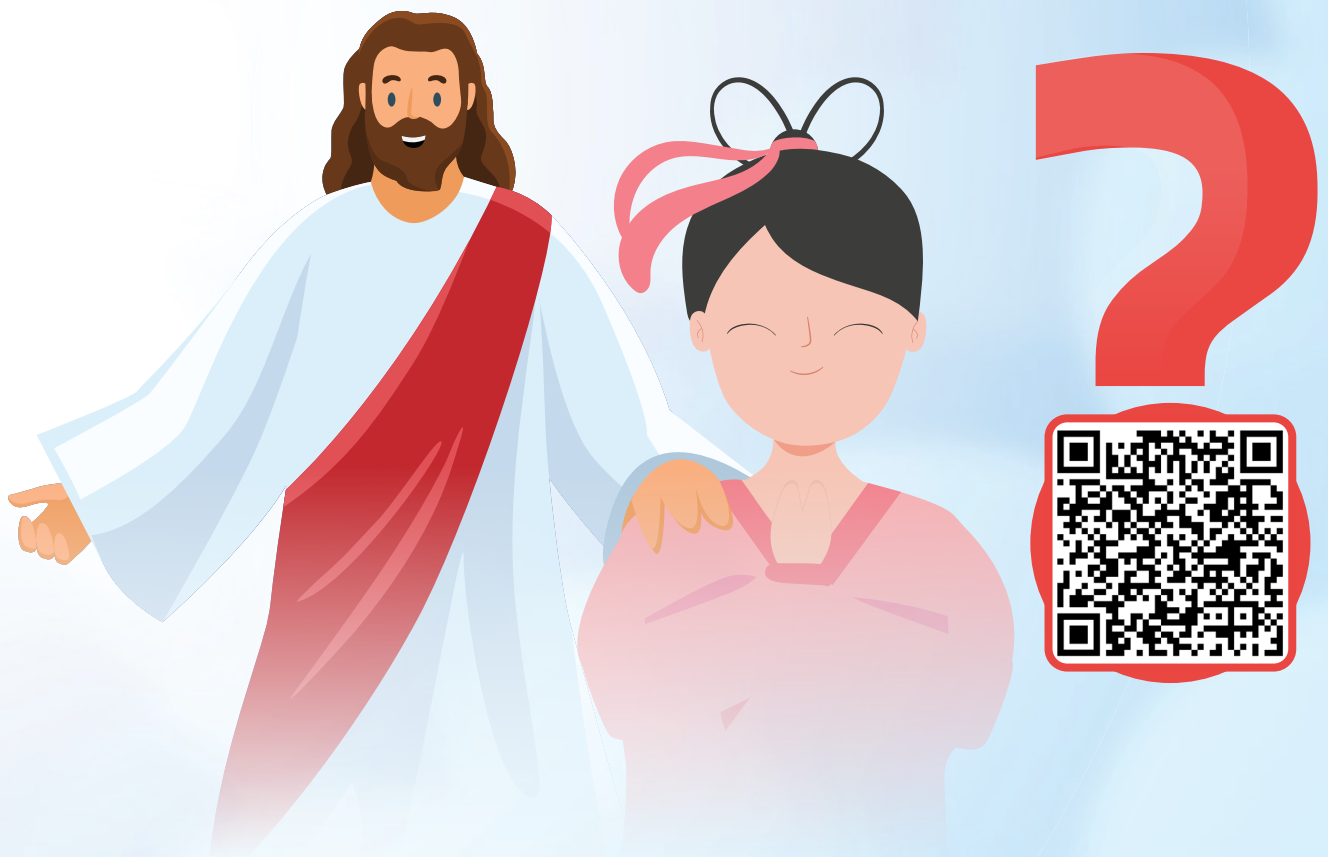
Father Luke was relieved when the last day came around. Today, Little Li would consume the last Host – her special Friend. At daybreak, she entered the church as usual and drew near to the altar. She knelt to the ground to pray very close to Jesus in the Sacred Host. Father Luke had to stifle a cry when a soldier suddenly appeared at the church door and aimed his gun at her. A single shot was heard, followed by laughter. The child immediately collapsed. Father Luke thought she was dead, but no! Grief stricken, he watched her struggle to crawl over to where the Host was, and could hardly believe his eyes when, in obvious pain, she put her tongue over the Sacred Host to receive her Jesus for the last time. She then drew her last breath and died: a true martyr's death.

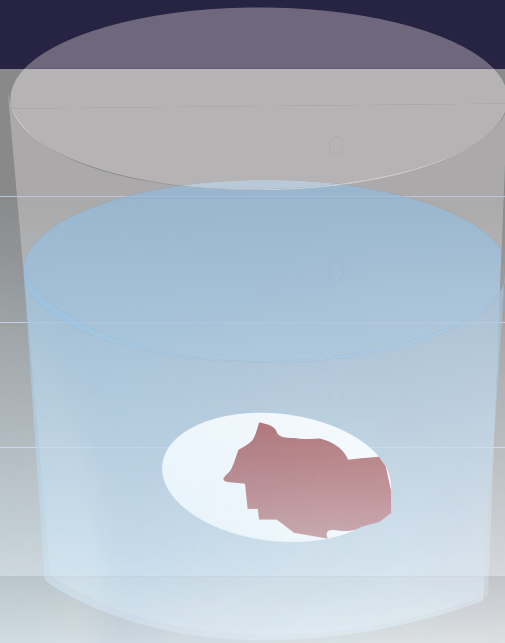
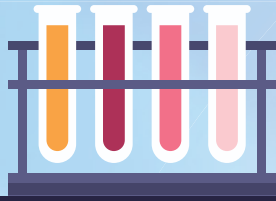
For a moment, the soldier simply looked as if trying to make sense of the terrible thing he just did. Then, he turned and rushed out of the church. However, it left the priest in a state of shock, but he knew what he must do next. The soldier returned and he released Father Luke and told him he was free to go. Without any hesitation, he rushed to the sanctuary to see the lifeless body of the little girl. As he knelt beside her, the soldier approached him and, by now saddened at what he saw he had done to a small child, said: "Sir, if in every town there was such a little girl, no soldier would ever fight for the Communists!"

Fortunately, Father Luke just had enough time to give Little Li a decent burial. As he left the cemetery and walked along the road, a man approached and invited him into his car. He dropped him off at the border. The priest escaped death and was now free and, that is the very reason we know about the story of this beautiful young Chinese girl martyr today.

Little Li was dead, but not before she had ensured that Jesus would not be further desecrated. Though gone from this world, her memory still lives on as it did in the person of Archbishop Sheen, and in the countless millions of people worldwide that he, through her story, encouraged to pray a holy hour as often as possible before the Blessed Sacrament.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen knew that Little Li understood perfectly that the Blessed Sacrament is Jesus, Light of the world and the joy of all hearts. O how He longs for people to treat Him with respect and to pay due reverence to Him in the tabernacle when we go into our churches.





READING THIRTY: ONE EUCHARISTIC MIRACLE, INVOLVING POPE FRANCIS

Scripture:

"Jesus said: 'I am the bread which came down from heaven.'"

(John 6:41)

Reading:

On August 15, 1996, in the church of Santa Maria in Buenos Aires, the capital city of the South American country of Argentina, a person dropped the sacred Host on the floor and left it there. Another person told the priest after Mass. The priest, Father Alejandro Pezet, placed the consecrated Host in a glass of water, and put it in the tabernacle, waiting for it to dissolve.

On August 26, the tabernacle was reopened to remove the fallen Host from the container, and it was found that the Host had not dissolved and had some reddish stains that were growing day by day. The Parish priests hurriedly went to the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio (now Pope Francis), to tell him what had happened. It was decided that they wait before going ahead with more investigations.

Between 2000 and 2005, several tests were carried out in different laboratories. They showed blood samples of blood type AB and heart tissue which indicated much suffering. The results were given to Cardinal Bergoglio in 2006.

“Jesus speaks in silence in the Mystery of the Eucharist. He reminds us every time that following him means going out of ourselves and not making our life a possession of our own, but rather a gift to him and to others.”

(Pope Francis, Solemnity of Corpus Christi, 30 May 2013)



Prayer:

*Dear Jesus,
thank You
for helping
us to believe
through
Your many
wonderful
miracles.*



Sweet Jesus,
with this First Holy Communion,
I offer You my thoughts, my words,
and all that I do. May Your grace
help me to be ready to
receive You always.



Acknowledgment: The readings found in this resource have been collated by, and in places are the work of, Rev Fr Brendan Murphy SDB and were made available for parents and children undertaking the sacramental program in his own parish. We thank him for his generosity in giving permission for them to be shared with the parents, children and sacramental coordinators of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney.