

EUCHARIST SYMBOLS

The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium*, No. 11), and there are many symbols that represent the Eucharist.

Wheat. Wheat is a cereal grain with seeds that are ground into flour that is used as the main ingredient for bread. Jesus is the Bread of Life, the bread that came down from heaven. Sometimes wheat is represented by a single head of grain, or by a shock or sheaf of wheat, or a bunch of cut stalks bound together in a bundle.

A Loaf of Bread. Bread is the staple food of physical life, and Eucharistic bread is the staple food of the spiritual life. When Jesus fed the crowd of five thousand, he used five loaves of bread, when he fed the crowd of four thousand he used seven loaves of bread, and at the Last Supper he took a loaf of unleavened bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

A Basket. A basket is a container for bread. When Jesus fed the five thousand, he began with a basket of five loaves, and afterward there were twelve baskets of leftover bread. Likewise, when Jesus fed the four thousand he began with a basket of seven loaves, and afterward there were seven baskets of leftovers.

Fish. One, two, or more fish serve as a symbol for the Eucharist. When Jesus fed the five thousand, a miracle that prefigured the Last Supper and the Eucharist, Jesus used two fish; and when Jesus fed the four thousand, he also used two fish. After Jesus rose from the dead, Jesus appeared to the disciples, and to prove his Real Presence, he ate fish before them, and when he appeared at the Sea of Galilee, there was a charcoal fire with both bread and fish which Jesus gave to his disciples to eat.

Loaves and Fishes were part of Jesus’ Eucharistic miracles and the meal Jesus shared with his disciples after the Resurrection.

A Host. A host is a round piece of unleavened bread which is consecrated and becomes the Body of Christ or the Blessed Sacrament. The term comes from the Latin word *hostia* which means sacrifice, and Jesus sacrificed his body on the Cross.

A Cluster of Grapes. Grapes are crushed into juice that is fermented into wine. Jesus used wine at the Last Supper, and he declared that it is his blood, the blood of the covenant, which would be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.

A Cup or Chalice. Jesus used a cup for the wine at the Last Supper, and a chalice is used for the Precious Blood at Mass.

Droplets of Blood. Jesus offered his blood at the Last Supper, shed his blood on the Cross, and communicants receive his Blood during Holy Communion.

A Ciborium. A ciborium is a sacred vessel used as a container for the hosts at Mass and to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.

A Monstrance. A monstrance is a large, ornate receptacle used to display the Blessed Sacrament for Benediction or Eucharistic Adoration.

A Paten. A paten is a flat plate used for a single larger host or a number of smaller ones.

The Altar. The altar is the table where the Eucharistic sacrifice is offered.

A Lamb. Jesus is the Lamb of God, and as he offered his Body at the First Eucharist, he offered his Body on the Cross.

The Pelican and Her Chicks. When food is in short supply, a mother pelican pierces her breast with her beak and feeds her chicks with her blood; she lays down her life and her chicks are saved. This serves as a symbol for Jesus whose side was pierced by a sword and blood flowed out; he laid down his life while the communicant receives his blood and is saved.

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