

THE EUCHARIST: BEST OF THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

Sermon by [Rev. Msgr. Vincent Nicholas Foy](#)

preached at the evening Mass on Sunday, February 12, 1956

The Eucharist Is the Best of the Past and the Best of the Future

If we were told – we here this evening – that we could have in our possession now, the best of the past and the best of the future, would we not think such a statement incredible?

What can we call out of the past that we could call the best? Would it be happy days of childhood, days of laughter ... days of youth and health and strength? Or perhaps we might think the best of the past to be all that man has mined and discovered and invented and produced: we might think of gold, money, the best of homes, the best of clothes, food, medicine, cars and televisions and all the goods which man in the past has brought to reality with his mind and hands and imagination.

And what can we predict for the future which is the best? We might think of peace, of universal government, of larger lives and better health; we might think of the fruits of atomic energy, the 1000 wonders yet to be evolved from electronic research, the wonders of Medicine to come, the benefits to be eventually derived from the conquest of outer space and other planets.

Thinking along these lines, it would seem incredible that we can possess now the best of the past and the best of the future. This is perhaps because we, living in a world of breadth and length and thickness, so often think along the immaterial grooves to which flesh has chained us.

One of the great theologians of our day, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, has made the almost incredible statement that we can possess now the best of the past and the best of the future. His explanation is simple, but as true as truth itself. He tells us: "*In the Blessed Eucharist we possess the best of the past and the best of the future.*"

The Best of the Past

After all, in the order of *absolute reality*, is not the best of the past our redemption by Christ on the Cross – the purification of our souls by the blood of the Son of God?

The Blessed Eucharist is not a reminder of our redemption in the way a crucifix in our homes or in our churches is a reminder. Nor is it a symbol of our redemption, the way the crown of thorns, the beggar's cloak, the reed, the heavy lash, the hammer, nails, and the vinegar-soaked sponge are symbols. These are but figures recalling the long ago.

In the Eucharist, in the Sacrifice of the Mass, we believe is the re-enactment of our redemption as it took place on Calvary: the same High Priest and the same Victim. Only the manner of offering is different. This we learned long ago. In the Catechism the question is asked: "Is the Mass a different sacrifice from that of the Cross?" And the answer is: "No; because the same Christ who once offered Himself as bleeding Victim to His heavenly Father on the Cross, continues to offer Himself in an unbloody manner by the hands of His priests on our altars."

All of the great ... of the death of Christ for us is memorialized and re-enacted in an unbloody manner in the Sacrifice of the Mass, in keeping with the Divine Command: "Do this for a commemoration of Me."

And what next of the redemption is the best of the past? Is it not the Presence of God with us? God has always shown His love by the company of man. When He formed man after His own image; so God spoke to Adam in Eden; He appeared to His prophets and Saints. So when the Jewish people were wandering in the desert God stayed with them in the form of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

And has not God continued to keep us company?

When Christ was hanging white and bloodless on the Cross the cry came: "If thou be the Son of Man, come down from the Cross." Christ has come down from the Cross into our tabernacles. Out of love for us Christ has watched and waited on all the altars and in all the Tabernacles throughout the centuries even as He rests on the altar of this church tonight: to be adored, to be thanked and to help us and grant the graces which all of us sorely need.

And what has been the best of the past for us as individuals? If we had the spiritual vision of our angel, the vision that strips away all that is transitory, all vanity and folly, would we not see in our past Holy Communion the best of the past? There was the day of our First Holy Communion, which many of us regard as the happiest of our lives, when we went with folded hands and white souls to meet Christ face to face at the Communion table and to become one with Him. There were all the other Communion when perhaps with souls washed by the Blood of our Saviour in Confession, we approached our God in Holy Communion and felt the joy of His Presence in our souls.

There dear friends were the best of the past, our redemption, the Masses since said, the Presence of God in our midst, and all the past worthy Holy Communion: in a word – the Eucharist.

It is the Best of the Future

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange tells us that the Eucharist is also the *best of the future*.

How can this be? What is the best of the future?

Looking at the future as it should be looked at, through the eyes of God, with the vision we will look at when we stand facing God to be judged, is not the best of the future the acts of charity which we shall perform and the degree of charity to which we shall attain? Besides this all else is secondary.

God gave of all the best to His Blessed Mother: yet He did not give her riches, He did not give her material wealth, a fine home, the latest fruits of medicine in progress. Yet God gave her the best: the greatest degree of charity ever possessed by a creature, a great love that embraces all her spiritual children.

My dear brethren, the royal road to charity is through the Eucharist and especially Holy Communion. Through Holy Communion we are united to Christ in a bond of love, more closely than two pieces of wax which when melted became one. Through Holy Communion we are united by a bond of charity to all those who have partaken and do partake and shall partake of the same Bread: to the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Saints and to all others, from the highest to the lowest sons of God. In Holy

Communion we are given a special sacramental grace – the grace to grow in love of God and others, the grace to make our impulses to charity operative, the grace to grow in beauty and strength of soul before God.

No wonder Pope Pius X, now St. Pius X had frequently to say: “Beloved children, the surest, easiest, shortest way to Heaven is by the Holy Eucharist.”

In another way the Eucharist is the best of the future. In the prayer which the priest says in giving Holy Communion outside of mass occurred the words: “*Oh Sacred Banquet, in which Christ is consumed, in which is recalled the memory of His passion and in which there is given to us a pledge of our future glory.*” So Holy Communion is a pledge, an earnest, a sign of our future glory in Heaven. Christ made it such. When He was foretelling the institution of the Eucharist, He recalled that during the forty years in which the Jewish people were in the desert after they had escaped from Egypt, God sent them a food called Manna which tasted like bread and honey.

“And yet” said Christ, “although your Fathers ate of this food from God, they are dead. But whosoever shall eat of the Food that I will give shall live forever.”

Surely in Holy Communion, the royal road to charity and the pledge of eternal life, is contained the best of the future.

The Lesson for us Here and Now

My dear brethren, what do the truths which we have been considering mean to each of us here present?

Are we going to always continue as we perhaps have, without minding the words of Christ: “*Be ye perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect.*” Shall we who are here this evening travel down all the byways of life, chasing butterflies as it were, the roads of vanity and folly, blind roads where money and pleasure beckons: roads not of sin, perhaps, but roads which twist and turn and lead us nowhere, roads turning us aside from the one straight true and only important road – the road to charity and to God?

Next Wednesday we are reminded of the folly of following all the byways and side roads of life. The Ashes will be placed on our foreheads and once again we will hear the familiar words: “*Remember that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return.*” These are the words which there at our graveside side we will also hear. They recall the words of Christ of heavenly wisdom: “*Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust and moth consume and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume and where thieves do not break through and steal.*”

Let us realize, my dear brethren that in the Eucharist, in the Mass, in the true Presence and in Holy Communion, we have the fountainhead of all grace, the greatest of the Sacraments. Through the Eucharist, and by the hands of the priest, grace is channeled from the wounds of Christ into our souls. And, that Grace, that love of God, that love of other is the treasure that cannot rust nor be consumed, nor stolen by thieves.

As St Paul says: “*Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? Or distress? Or famine? Or nakedness? Or danger? Or persecution? Or the world?*”

... In all these things we overcome, because of Him that hath loved us.

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We here, my dear brethren, can make no better resolution for this coming Lent than to make Lent a Eucharistic Lent.

How can we do this?

1. We can make it a Eucharistic Lent by attendance at daily Mass, if possible; or if that is not possible by attendance at Mass on some days as well as on Sundays and by greater devotion at Mass.
2. We can make it a Eucharistic Lent by visits to Christ present in the Tabernacle.
3. We can make it a Eucharistic Lent by attending Lenten devotions, where we receive Christ's blessing at Benediction.
4. We can make it a Eucharistic Lent by more frequent reception of Holy Communion with better preparation and thanksgiving.

And having visited Christ and assisted at His offering on the Altar for us, and having partaken of His Body and Blood worthily, we partake of all that is best in this world. We should go back into our homes, our offices, our factory, our store, our workshop, and mingle with other relatives and friends with a greater peace, a true joy, a stronger love of them and love of God.

Indeed, my dear brethren, in the Eucharist, by the Eucharist and through the Eucharist we have the best of the past and the best of the future.

This handwritten sermon by + Msgr. Vincent Nicholas Foy, was typed for the first time on Shrove Tuesday, March 4, 2025 by [EUCHARISTIC ADORATION - www.perpetualeucharisticadoration.com](http://www.perpetualeucharisticadoration.com)

One can imagine Msgr. Foy preaching this sermon with his great love, devotion to and faith in the Eucharist. After a long day working at the Chancery, he would travel far to be the guest preacher at Forty Hour devotions with exposition at parishes. Msgr. Foy was a great supporter of perpetual adoration and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, which have grown much since he preached this sermon in 1956. He was a co-founder and director of our registered charity, which promotes and assists parishes to establish and expand Eucharistic and perpetual adoration. We praise God for Msgr. Vincent Foy's wise spiritual and practical direction, mentorship, and assistance. www.perpetualeucharisticadoration.com