

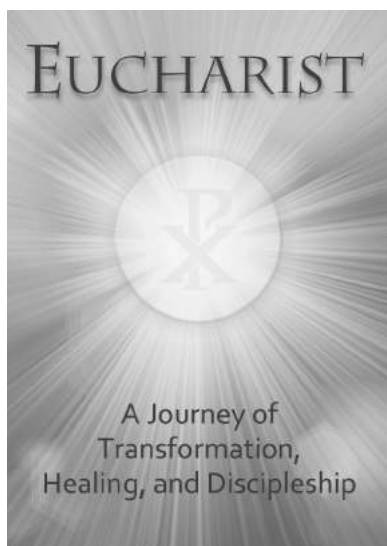
EUCHARIST



A Journey of Transformation,
Healing, and Discipleship

GUIDE

Mary Amore, D. Min.



This guide is a supplement to the DVD
*Eucharist: Invitation to Transformation,
Healing, and Discipleship*

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A Journey of Transformation, Healing, and Discipleship GUIDE

By Mary Amore



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How to Use This Guide

Jesus practically ate his way through his ministry, dining with saints and sinners alike. There is one common element that appeared each time Jesus sat down with others to eat. Almost everyone who dined with Jesus walked away transformed, healed of their sins, and eager to share their experience of Jesus with others. Each time we go to Mass, we, too, dine with Jesus. Do we walk away transformed, healed of our sins, and excited to share our eucharistic encounter with our family and friends?

Both the DVD, *Eucharist: Invitation to Transformation, Healing, and Discipleship*, and this guide are meant to reawaken and reinforce your love for Jesus in the Eucharist and help you discover new meaning in your experience of the Blessed Sacrament. The material is presented by Dr. Mary Amore, a noted speaker and author who holds a Doctor of Ministry Degree in Liturgy and Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies from Catholic Theological Union. Dr. Amore invites you to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist in three ways: to be spiritually transformed, renewed in your discipleship, and spiritually healed. The DVD and guide can be used for your own spiritual enrichment or as a catechetical and faith-formation resource in parish or other group settings.

Each section in this guide contains six steps, which explore the three segments of the DVD in greater detail. The six steps are

designed to enhance your comprehension of the material in the DVD and deepen your love for the Eucharist:

- ❁ Step One: *Meditation on Scripture*
- ❁ Step Two: *Invitation to the Reader*
- ❁ Step Three: *Opportunities for Spiritual Growth*
- ❁ Step Four: *Personal Reflection*
- ❁ Step Five: *Spiritual Exercises*
- ❁ Step Six: *Going Forward*

As you read through each of the six steps, you are invited to prayerfully reflect on the content and open your heart to the Holy Spirit. The *Personal Reflection* questions are designed to till the soil of your soul and allow the material to take root in your heart. There are no right or wrong answers, and you are encouraged to take plenty of time with each step. This DVD guide will help you to explore and further understand Jesus' powerful eucharistic presence in your life.

A Note on Step Five

Most of the steps in this guide are self-explanatory, but the fifth step, *Spiritual Exercises*, offers three different options that require a bit more explanation.

1. Write a Prayer

The first option for this step is to write your own prayer based on your experience of Jesus in the Eucharist. The structure of the prayer follows the format of the traditional Collect prayer, which

is prayed at the beginning of each Mass. The Collect prayer is often addressed to the Trinity and recognizes God's work in our lives. It follows the simple format: *You, Who, Do, Through*.

Let's take a closer look at each of the parts of the prayer:

You: Direct your prayer to the first person of the Trinity. Who is God the Father for you? There are countless ways to call upon God in prayer, for example: Father in heaven, Lord God, God of all Creation, All powerful God.

Who: State what God has done for you. For example, you might write, "Lord God, *who* has blessed me with the grace of baptism," or "Father in heaven, *who* gave me the gift of my family." Be specific in this section since this is your personal experience of God.

Do: Ask God *to do* something for you. Here, you may ask God for whatever you need in life: for health, for a new job, for the well-being of your family. This part of the prayer can be lengthier.

Through: We offer all prayers through Christ our Lord in union with the Holy Spirit. In this closing line, you may choose titles for Jesus and the Holy Spirit that seem appropriate: "*through* Jesus Christ, the divine healer, and the Holy Spirit," or "*through* the Holy Spirit, who transforms the hearts of all believers in Christ." The prayer closes with an "Amen."

This traditional format for writing prayers can be used for any and all occasions in your life, from table blessings, to the blessing

of a loved one, to seeking the help of the Lord. What is most important in writing a prayer is that it should come from your heart.

After you write a particular prayer as a spiritual exercise, be aware of changes in your life. Ponder the ways the Lord might be answering your prayer request. Is the situation changing? Or is your perspective changing? Are you more aware of the Lord's presence in your midst? Be open to the spiritual transformation and healing that is unfolding in your life as a result of the prayer offerings that you bring to the eucharistic table of the Lord.

2. Adoration

The second option for step five is to spend quiet time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. All you have to do is find an adoration chapel or an open parish in your area and sit in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. There, you can prayerfully reflect on the material you have recently covered in the DVD and guide. If distractions come to your mind, give them over to the Lord so that the time spent in adoration can be fruitful and beneficial to your spiritual life. Focus on the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and invite him into to your heart and your life. Close your time of prayer by thanking Jesus for the gift of his presence in the Eucharist.

3. Drinking from the Chalice

The third option for step five involves the ritual act of drinking from the Communion chalice during the Mass, if it is available in

your parish. During the Last Supper, Jesus gave the disciples the cup and said, “Drink from it, all of you” (Mt 26:27). The ritual of drinking from the eucharistic chalice is an optional rite¹ for lay people because Jesus is wholly present in both the Body and the Blood. For this option, you are invited to make a conscious decision to walk over to the Communion chalice. If you choose this option, there is a reflection in each section that will help you to pray with the content and bring the fruit of your contemplation to Jesus as you receive from the Communion chalice.

1. Drinking from the chalice is an optional rite for lay people because the whole Christ—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—is present in both the Eucharistic wine and the Eucharistic bread. This is called the Doctrine of Concomitance. One does not have to drink from the chalice to receive the fullness of the Eucharistic Christ.

SECTION ONE

Eucharist: A Pathway to Spiritual Transformation

Step One: Meditation on Scripture

The Wedding Feast at Cana (Jn 2:1–11)

In the Gospel of John, a wedding celebration takes place in Cana and Jesus and his Apostles are invited guests. Also present is Mary, the mother of Jesus. The identity of the lucky bridal couple from Cana who had such distinguished guests at their wedding is unknown. The action in this Scripture story hinges on Mary, the mother of Jesus, who notices that the wine is running short. She shares this important piece of information with Jesus, and the dialogue that ensues is a bit surprising.

Mary tells Jesus, “They have no more wine.” He responds, “Woman, what concern is that to you and me? My hour has not yet come” (Jn 2:4). In other words, “Mother, what do you want me to do about this now?” Seemingly undisturbed by her son’s response, Mary demonstrates her great faith in Jesus by instructing the waiters, “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). In essence, Mary puts Jesus on the spot because her trust in him is unwavering, and

she believes that he will know how to handle the situation. Jesus responds by instructing the waiters to fill up six large stone jars with water. Then in the presence of his disciples, wedding guests, the wait staff, and his mother, Jesus transforms water into wine, and thus performs his first public miracle.

Embedded in this beloved Gospel story are four spiritual themes that invite us to a more profound experience of Jesus in the Eucharist: Faith, Hope, Surrender, and Abundance. Let's explore each of these themes.

Faith

Faith is essential to our spiritual life as Christians. It was Mary's unwavering faith that set things in motion for the miracle Jesus performed at the Wedding Feast in Cana. Faith is a catalyst for change and transformation in our spiritual lives. It is a free gift from God, but our faith also needs to be nurtured. It needs to be cultivated and cared for each day so that our trust in Jesus can deepen and intensify.

Unfortunately, in today's world many people are experiencing a crisis of faith. They have physical sight but they lack faith; their eyes fail to see the presence of God in the world. Many Catholics in the pews have difficulty believing that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. Perhaps you have doubted Jesus' presence in the Eucharist too. It is good to acknowledge any doubt you feel and ask to the Lord to help you come to a deeper belief in his Real Presence in the Eucharist. When we doubt Jesus' presence in the world, and most especially in the Eucharist, we are like the wedding guests at Cana who missed the transformation of water into wine even though it happened right before their very eyes.

At every Mass, during the Eucharistic Prayer, we hear the story of the Last Supper: Jesus took ordinary bread and wine, said the blessing, broke the bread, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body” (Mt 26:26). Then he took the cup and said, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:27–28). As Catholics, we believe that, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of consecration, the bread and wine on the altar during Mass are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus, just as they were at the Last Supper. During this mystical moment in the Eucharistic Prayer, the physical substance of the bread and wine cease to exist and are transformed into Christ.

Do we have faith in the words of Jesus? Do we believe that the bread and wine are really transformed into the sacramental Real Presence of our Lord during the Mass? Barring a miracle, our human eyes will not see a change in the bread and wine; this mystery of our Catholic faith can only be grasped through the eyes of faith. But, belief in the life-giving words of Jesus at the Last Supper will lead us to experience his presence in the Eucharist. And, over time, our deep faith in the eucharistic presence of Jesus will inspire us to model our life after Mary who told the waiters at the wedding feast, “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5).



How can you grow in your faith in the eucharistic presence of Christ so that you may do whatever Jesus tells you?

Hope

When the wine ran out in Cana, Mary simply went to Jesus and stated the problem. She didn't tell him how to solve it. Mary's unshakable faith in Jesus gave her the expectant hope that he would know how to handle the situation. We are called to model Mary's unwavering hope at the Wedding Feast at Cana when our lives become difficult. When we are spiritually "running out of wine," it is not always easy to be hopeful because our human nature can easily fall into despair. People often lose hope when they feel that things are out of their control and there is no way out of a situation. Hope is a spiritual fruit of our deep faith in God; it is the ray of light in the darkness of life that tells us that things will get better because God is with us.

Each and every day we are faced with unexpected problems that shake us to our very core; crosses that crush our hearts with pain and push us to our very limits. In dry moments, when we are "running out of wine," our faith in the eucharistic presence of Jesus invites us to place our painful crosses into his loving care; and like Mary, we trust that Jesus will transform our darkness into light.



Have there been times when your encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist has filled you with the hope that Jesus wants what is best for you and will handle your problems if you surrender them to the Lord?

Surrender

The Wedding Feast at Cana also invites us to consider our relationship with Jesus. It is evident in the story that Mary and Jesus shared a special mother-son bond based on mutual love and trust. Their mutual and loving relationship was the driving factor that led Mary to surrender the wine shortage problem into the hands of Jesus. Mary was completely open to Jesus handling the problem as he saw fit; she surrendered the situation to his will.

In order to trust Jesus with our life, we have to know him. For many people, their relationship with Jesus is not heart centered, but based on concepts learned when they were young. This was the case for me. I attended Catholic grammar school in the 1950s. As part of my religious education, I had to memorize the entire *Baltimore Catechism*, and I got As on all my tests. I faithfully attended Mass every Sunday when I was growing up, not because I wanted to go, but because I didn't want to be condemned to eternal damnation. I knew all the rules and followed them faithfully. I considered myself a model Catholic.

It wasn't until I became a wife and a mother and began trying to pass my faith on to my children that I realized everything I knew about Jesus was based on head knowledge. The doctrine that I had memorized in my youth had never made its way into my heart. I felt unable to answer my children's questions about Jesus, especially the Eucharist. Even though I obeyed all the rules of my Catholic faith, I realized that my spiritual life was on empty; I was metaphorically "running out of wine."

Like Mary at the Wedding Feast of Cana, I decided to turn to Jesus for help. I trusted that he would hear my prayers. When I

went to Mass, I asked Jesus for the grace to experience his divine presence in the Eucharist each time I approached the altar. My heart was hungry for the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation. I actively searched for Jesus in the Eucharist, week after week, month after month, and the Lord did not disappoint. Over time, I began to experience the depths of Christ's mercy and love, especially when I came to the eucharistic table.

Jesus' divine presence began to take root in my daily life. Transformation was beginning to occur. The Eucharist was no longer just the doctrine I had memorized as a child; it was a lived experience. Now, the Eucharist is my spiritual nourishment, sustenance, and strength for living each day. I believe with all of my heart that the bread and wine at Mass are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. Today, my relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist is the single most important factor in my faith life. By surrendering my life into the hands of Jesus, my life was transformed forever.

Like our Blessed Mother, it is important for us to have a personal, living relationship with Jesus, rooted in love and trust, not simply memorized facts. We can ask the Holy Spirit to invite us into this loving relationship with God the Father and his Son, Jesus. To understand what this relationship looks like, think of the person you love the most in life; perhaps it is your spouse or your children, your grandchildren, or your best friend. What do you experience when you are together? Happiness? Peace? Love? Trust? Contentment? Fidelity? Do you experience anything like this in your relationship with God? If not, why not? After all, shouldn't your relationship with God be the single most important one in your life?

Through our encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist we develop a mutual and loving relationship with God that can transform our life forever. A deep relationship with Jesus will give us the courage to follow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and surrender our lives to our loving Father's will as Jesus did.



In what ways is Jesus inviting you to surrender your life to him in order that you may experience an abundance of life-giving grace and transformation?

Abundance

At the Wedding Feast in Cana, after Jesus transformed the water into wine, the head waiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now" (Jn 2:9–10). Clearly, the miraculous wine proved to be a far superior vintage than the head waiter had expected. This illustrates what can happen to us when Jesus enters into our life and turns our scarcity into abundance. In Jesus, we have everything we need.

Unfortunately, many of us are like the head waiter who failed to recognize the work of God right in his midst. We have been duped into believing we can buy joy and fulfillment, so we seek our happiness elsewhere. We work long hours so we can have money to purchase a bigger house, new shoes, a faster car, and the latest gadget. In the end, we only find ourselves frustrated and still wanting more. But Jesus knows what we need before we can even