

Why do we celebrate the Eucharist (Communion) every week?

In certain times and places within Anglicanism and across various parts of the Christian church, you can find the belief that the Eucharist (also called Mass, or Communion) should only be celebrated infrequently – once a month, or even only once a year – in order to preserve the special attention and prayerfulness that we bring to our remembering of this event in Jesus' life. I grew up in an Anglican church which celebrated the Eucharist once a month. It was a big adjustment for members of that congregation when a new priest started with us and insisted that we should be coming to God's table every Sunday.

The difference lies in our understanding of Eucharist. Yes, it is a remembrance of a specific event in Jesus' life and ministry, the night of his arrest, the last supper with his closest friends and disciples as he tried to impart final wisdom to them before his death, as he tried to communicate to them that, although he would be dying, he would also always continue to be with them. But for the churches who celebrate the Eucharist the majority of Sundays in a year, our sharing in the bread and wine also means much more.

It is not just about remembering something about Jesus, it is about remembering something about ourselves, and in this remembering, it becomes about **participation**. We remember that we come before God, each of us valued and loved, each of us reliant on God's good gifts to give us life. We remember that we are the Body of Christ, called to be people who embody Jesus' life – namely God's compassion, justice, peace, healing, service – in our broken world. That is why we say these words “the Body of Christ” when we receive the bread, “the blood of Christ,” when we receive the wine. It isn't just a statement about what we are receiving, it is a reminder of who we are.

Furthermore, it is about remembering something about our world, about the promise, the dream, of how God wants our world to look. God wants it to look like a place where all are fed and all are welcome, where we do unto others as God has done for us. It is about ritualizing, walking into the symbols, of where our faith is based – that God provides for our needs, that we are to provide for the needs of others, that we are never alone, that God is so fully with us that we carry God in our very own bodies, just as we take the bread and wine into our bodies. It is about gratitude. Eucharist means ‘thanksgiving.’ It is about remembering, noticing, giving thanks, for a world full of God's good gifts. Recognizing that as we participate in God's life through Jesus, we also participate in how those good gifts get multiplied to feed others.

Remembering one event in Jesus' life, this is arguably something that should be honoured in a special way at a particular time of the year. But remembering who *we are*, who we belong to, who we are called to be, and how God is with us, these are things that we have to remember all of the time. These are things that human beings are surprisingly adept at forgetting. We get off-track, off-centre, we forget. Week by week, we gather here with community, with song, with prayer, with the deepest hopes, heaviest burdens, and most joyous thanksgivings, and we remember. We remember and we participate. We find God again. We find ourselves again. And we journey on.