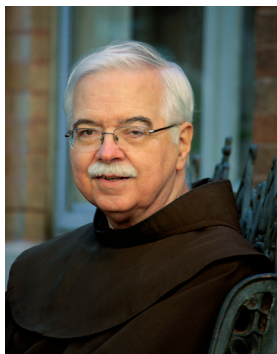


By Pat McCloskey, OFM



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Father Pat welcomes your questions!

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All questions sent by mail need to include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Francis of Assisi and the Eucharist

What did the Eucharist mean to St. Francis? How did he express his devotion to it?

The Eucharist is the closest connection that any follower of Jesus (Francis included) can get to Jesus. It flows out of our belief in the Incarnation. Francis defended the Eucharist against the Albigensians, the Catholic Church's strongest critics in his day. Because they taught that everything material is bad and everything spiritual is good, the Albigensians rejected the Eucharist and all the other sacraments. The feast of Corpus Christi, which had begun in Belgium, was extended to the worldwide Church about 30 years after Francis died.

In 1215, Pope Innocent III held the Fourth Lateran Council, which lasted only a month but had a major impact, especially on the celebration and reception of the Eucharist. That council legitimated the term *transubstantiation* and introduced the Easter duty (confession of mortal sins at least once a year), encouraging at least yearly reception of the Eucharist. Many people were so convinced about their unworthiness that they were content simply to look at the consecrated host during Mass or at Benediction.

Francis wrote several letters to encourage greater reverence for the Eucharist. Eucharistic devotion was the subject of several of his Admonitions to the friars. Francis was particularly concerned about the cleanliness of churches, especially altar linens and liturgical vessels. St. Clare, who shared this concern, embroidered many corporals and purificators for use at Mass.

Members of the Franciscan family, especially Secular Franciscans, eventually received holy Communion on specified liturgical feasts. In some ways, they were ahead of the frequent Communion promoted by St. Pius X more than 100 years ago for people properly prepared and disposed.



Pro-life or Pro-choice?

Can a Catholic be pro-choice? I am a practicing Catholic who is very pro-life. I know several Catholic women who are pro-choice. I'm an old man who thinks this is a contradiction.

In common usage, the term *pro-life* for most people today means *anti-abortion*. The protection of unborn life is fundamental for all other human rights. Many people, Catholics included, see no connection between being pro-life and opposing the death penalty. The late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin advocated for a "seamless garment" of life issues, but he was severely criticized by many Catholics (including several US cardinals) who felt he was betraying the pro-life cause.

The fact that more girl babies are carried to full term than boy babies in the United States suggests that more girls are being aborted in countries where most abortions are not chosen because of an unborn child's gender.

Every year since 1976, Catholic bishops have issued a "Faithful Citizenship" document a year before a presidential election. They have always affirmed the rights of the unborn, but they have never taught that all Catholics must consider only abortion in choosing for whom or what to vote.



Members of the working group for the "Faithful Citizenship" document attend the fall general assembly of the 2015 US Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore.



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