

# **We Are People of the Eucharist**

## ***Towards a renewed love for Holy Communion***

*Reflections on the Eucharist*  
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**December 2023**

**The Eucharist and The Family**

**“O Christ, What Shall We Offer You?”**

As our monthly reflections on the Eucharist come to a close, let us explore one final theme: The Eucharist and the Family.

As we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord, permit me to share with you an early childhood memory of Christmas.

As the youngest in my family, my sole task on Christmas Eve was to keep watch for the first star in the night sky and to announce “God’s star shines!” With this my family would gather around the table and sing the ancient carol “Boh predvichnyj” (God Eternal is born to us) and then begin the Sviat Vechir, that is, the traditional Christmas Eve Supper with its twelve lenten dishes specially prepared for the occasion.

At first I suspected that the task assigned to me was a sneaky way of keeping me occupied and out of trouble as a young boy; however, having checked it out with friends my age, I quickly learned that it indeed was a valid Christmas tradition practiced for generations!

A star. The Star. The Star of David. The Star of Bethlehem.



“In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we have observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage’ .... And there ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

“On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (Mt 2: 1-11).

The Wise Men from Persia clearly recognized the heavenly King born on earth. Led by a star, they arrived in Bethlehem bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And when they found the Christ-child lying in a manger, they adored him, the Eternal God.

The gifts of the Magi are of particular significance.

The gift of gold is a recognition that Jesus is the king of Israel, of the entire universe, and of the Kingdom of God to come.

The gift of frankincense signifies that Jesus is indeed God, since incense is used for worship, and we worship the One True God.

And the gift of myrrh, which was used to anoint bodies for burial purposes, reminds us that Jesus, already at his birth, is the one who has come to die as a perfect sacrifice for the people.

In these gifts, therefore, are contained all the mysteries of Christ. They point to the purpose of his coming to earth: royal king, divine God, and perfect sacrifice.

What about us? What gifts might we offer our King and our God?

Well, the verses taken from the vespers (evening prayer) for the Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord offer us some insights:

“O Christ, what shall we offer you for your coming on earth in our humanity for our sake? Every creature that has its being from you gives thanks to you: the angels offer hymns of praise, the heavens give a star; the magi present their gifts, and the shepherds their wonder; the earth provides a cave and the desert a manger. As for us, we offer a Virgin Mother!”

Gold. Frankincense. Myrrh. A virgin mother. Indeed, gifts fit for a King.

And what shall we offer Christ today?

For his part, Christ offers us each and every day his most precious gift, his body and his blood in the Divine Eucharist. For our part, let us draw near to Holy Communion regularly, each and every Sunday. But let us do more.

The greatest gift we can offer our each other this Christmas is an invitation to participate regularly in the Divine Liturgy (Mass) where we are nourished by the Word of God and by Jesus' body and blood.

Let us start by inviting our family members and friends, especially those have been away from Church for one reason or another, to come back home. God awaits them with open arms, with love, and wants to give them God's most precious gift, the Eucharist.

When you find the greatest gift, do you not want to share it with others? Are not your children and grandchildren and friends, who are most precious in your eyes and heart, not worth your efforts in blessing them by bringing them to Christ who offers them eternal life?

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