





# Chapter I

# The Eucharist





## What does the word Eucharist mean?



The word Eucharist means *to give thanks* to God. In the Eucharist we *thank* God especially for the gift of His Son Jesus.

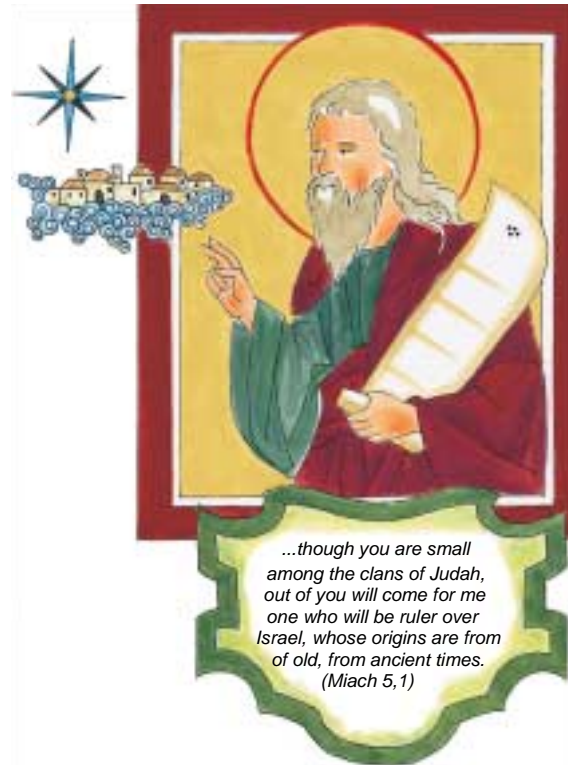


Jesus comes to save us.





The Angel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus to Mary.



...though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. (Micah 5,1)

Jesus was born in Bethlehem (“Bayt Lahem”). In Hebrew this means “House of Bread” In Arabic the name means “House of flesh” (“lahem = flesh”). Jesus will later say of himself: *“I am the Bread of Life which has come down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread, will live forever and that bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world”* (Jn 6, 51).



In the Eucharist we *thank* God also for *creation* which, as the Fathers of the Church say, was the first book God wrote, and especially for creating *man and woman* in his image and likeness.







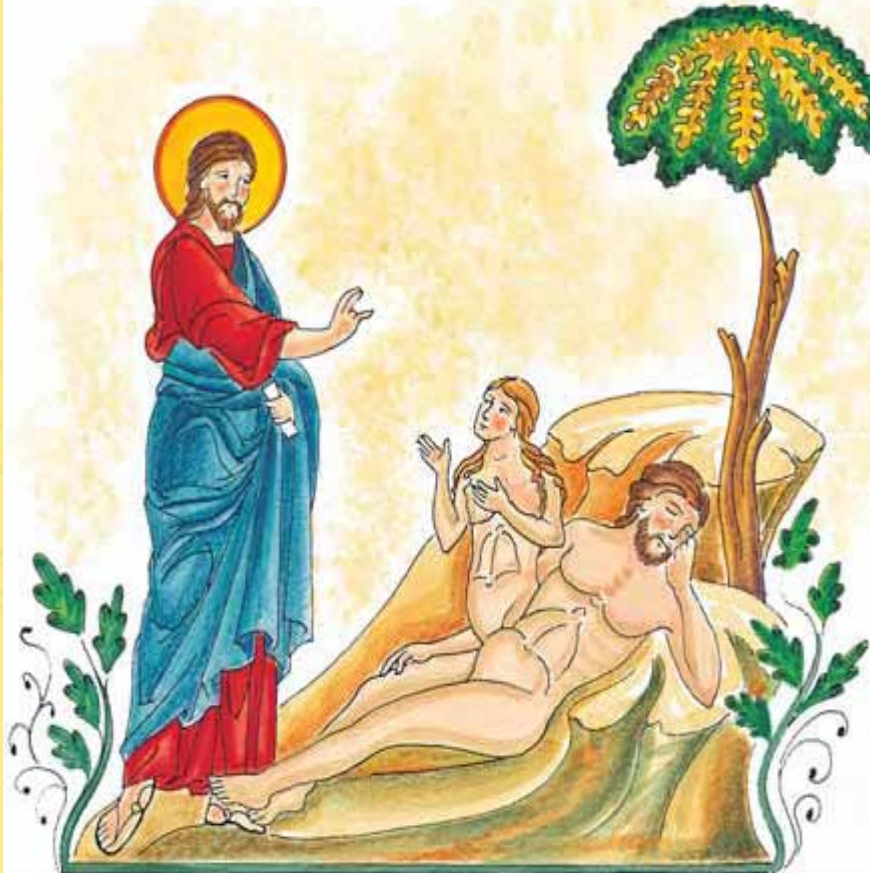
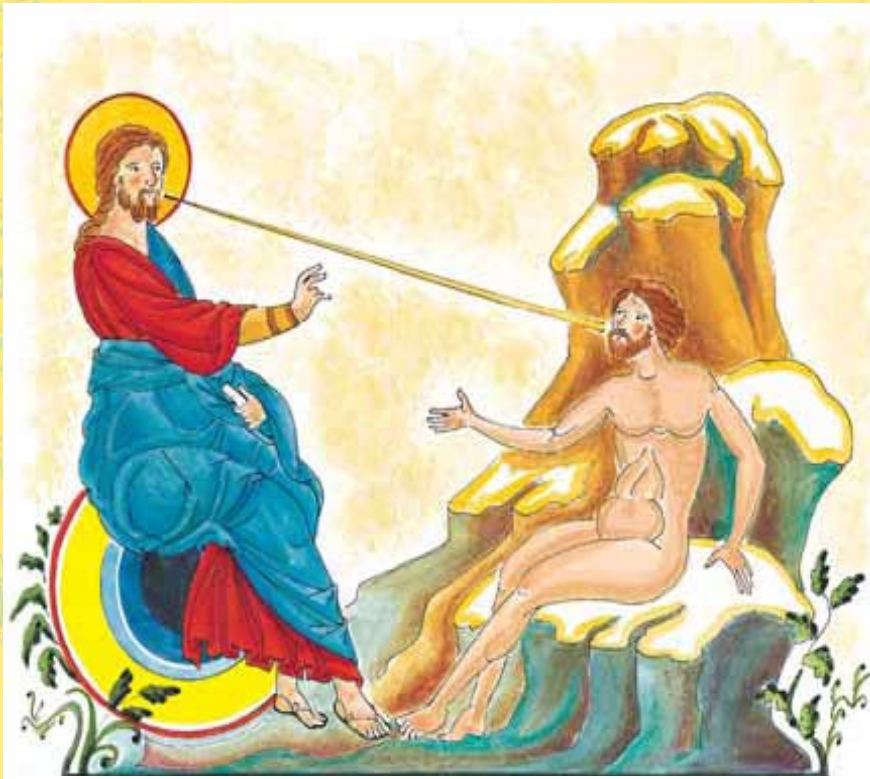
“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... and separated light from darkness ”  
(Gn 1, 1-4).






The material world was created from nothing in contrast to God who is without beginning. “While men, indeed, cannot make anything out of nothing, but only out of matter already existing, yet God is in this point pre-eminently superior to men, that He Himself called into being the substance of His creation, when previously it had no existence” (St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies* 2,10).





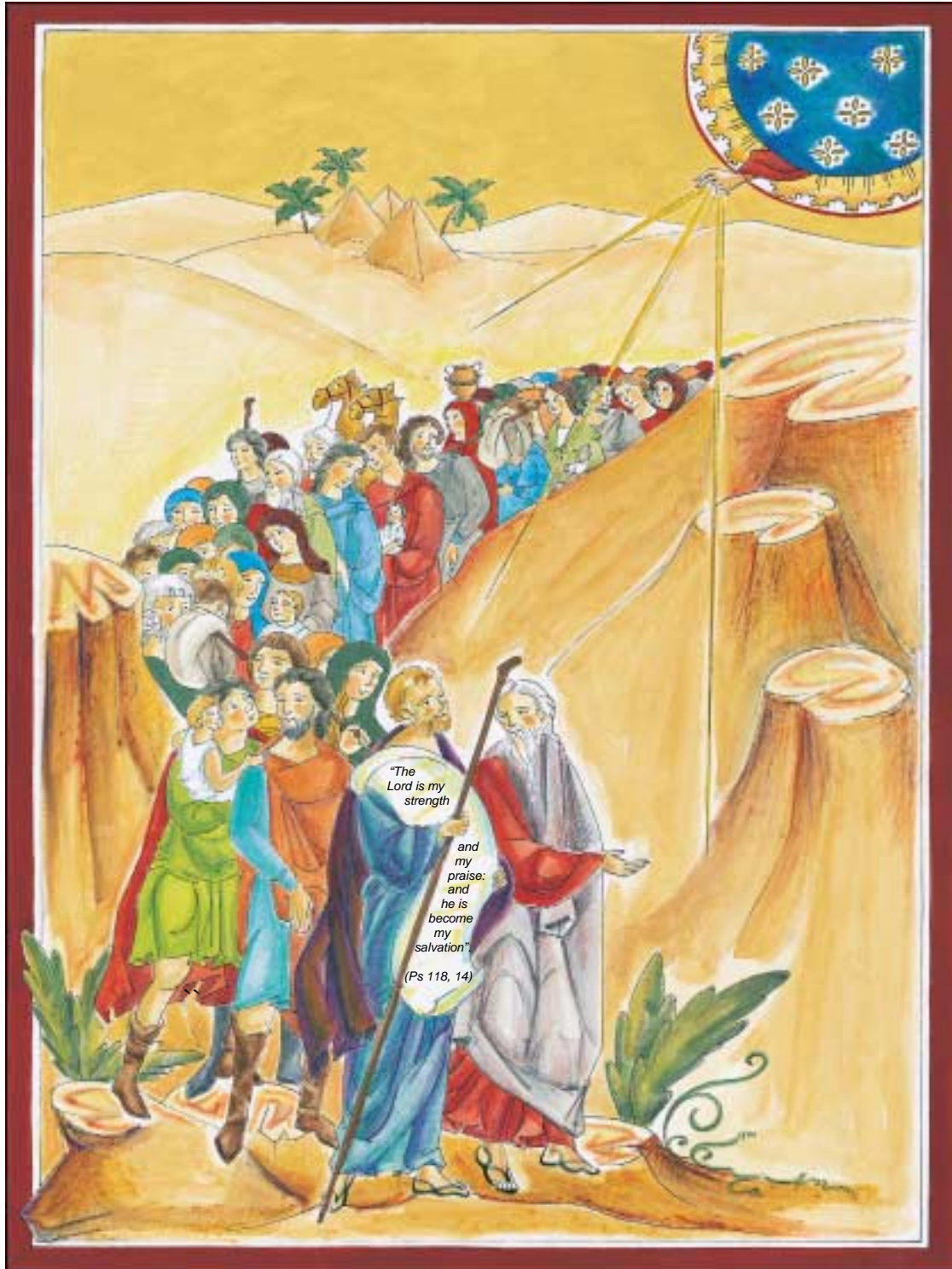
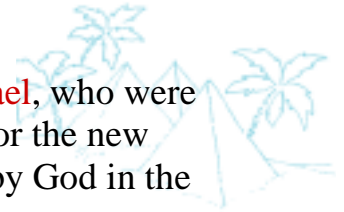




 God did not just create material things. He also created pure spirits, that is, the Angels and the soul of every man and woman. Angels are God’s ministers who guard and protect us. “The devil and the other demons were indeed created by God good by nature but they became bad through their free choice” (IV Lateran Council).



In the Eucharist we *give thanks* to God for the **People of Israel**, who were chosen by him to prepare the coming of his Son Jesus, and for the new People, the **Church**, who believe in Jesus and are sanctified by God in the Holy Spirit.



The People of Israel.



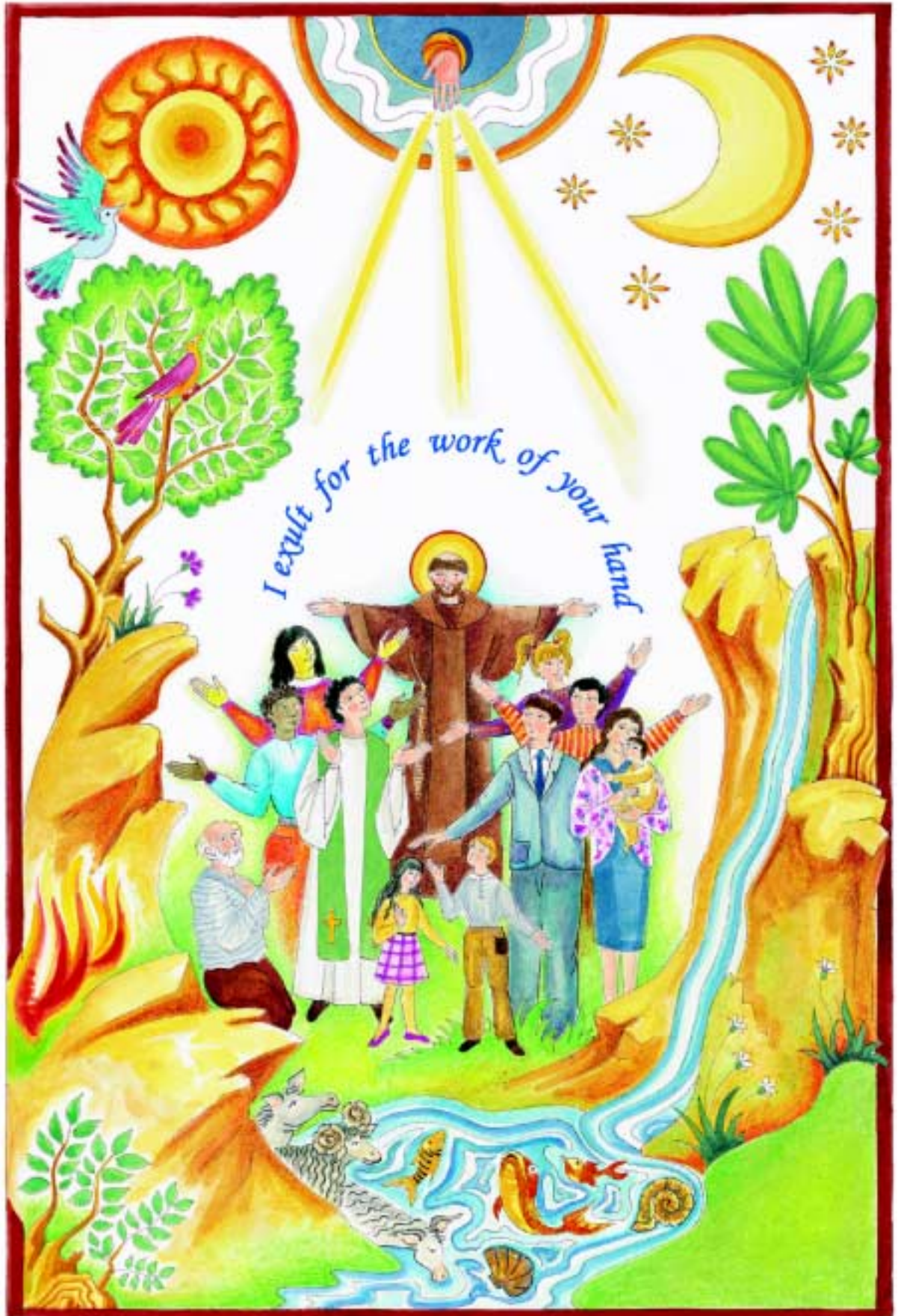


The Church, the new People of God.





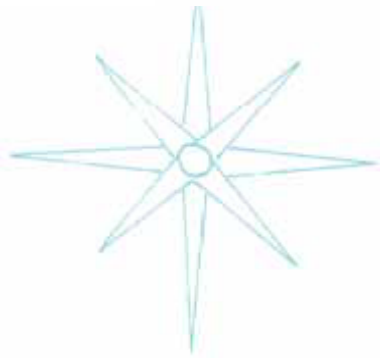
In the Eucharist we *give thanks* to God in the name of creation and all of humanity...







In the Eucharist we **give thanks** to God together with Jesus Christ: with Him, through Him and in Him.



“All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be” (*Jn 1,3*).

## Is the Eucharist called by other names too?

The Eucharist is also called:

**The Lord's Supper, The Wedding Feast of the Lamb, The Breaking of the Bread, The Eucharistic Assembly, Memorial, Holy Sacrifice, The Sacred and Divine Liturgy, The Most Blessed Sacrament, Holy Communion, The Bread of Angels, Bread from Heaven.**



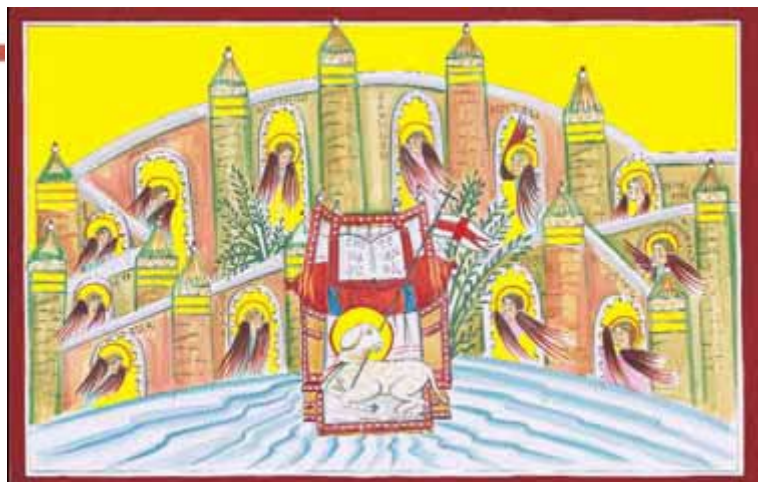
### *The Lord's Supper.*

Using this name we remember that **Meal** the Lord Jesus shared with his disciples on Holy Thursday, the evening before his Passion. This meal was the anticipation of the **Wedding Feast of the Lamb** in the heavenly Jerusalem, a symbol of paradise, the place the Lord has prepared for us:

**“Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb” (Ap 19,8).**



Paradise is the Heavenly Jerusalem; the Lamb, represented here is a symbol of Christ; the Church is the bride of the Lamb (shown here with solid walls, Angels and twelve gates, that remind us of the twelve tribes of Israel).



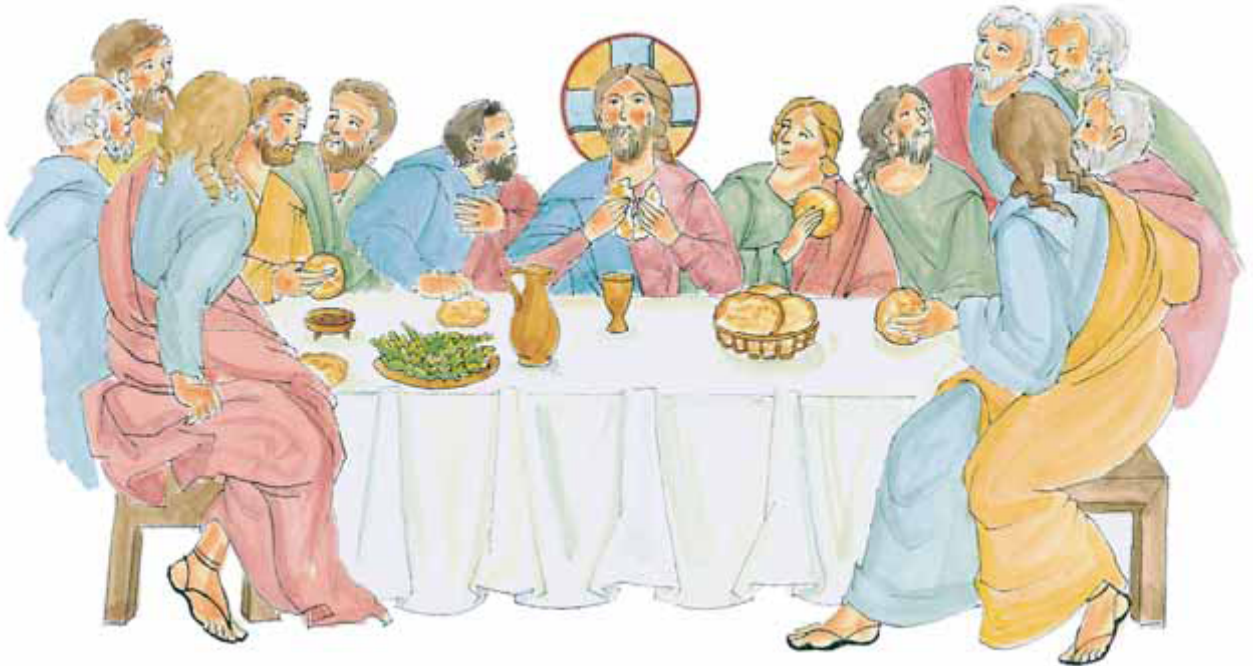






### *The Breaking of the Bread.*

It is called this because at the Last Supper Jesus, since he was at the head of the table, repeated a gesture that was typical during a Jewish meal. He broke the bread and gave it to his Apostles.



### *Eucharistic Assembly.*

It is called this because the Eucharist is celebrated in the assembly of the faithful, visible expression of the Church.







*Memorial of the Lord's Passover.*

It is given this name because the Eucharist makes the sacrifice that Christ offered to the Father on the Cross present and real. Jesus made this Sacrifice once and for all.



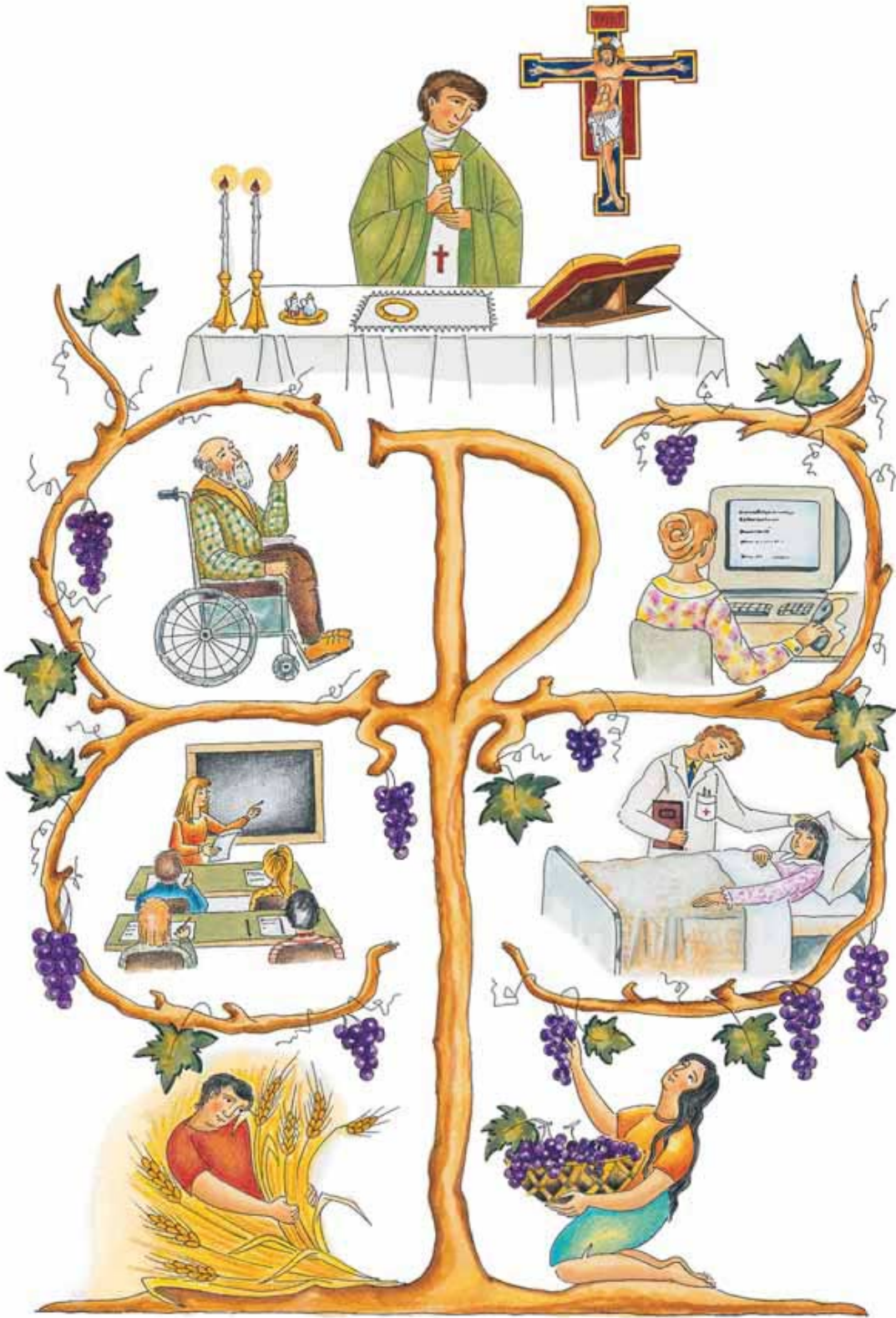


*Holy Sacrifice (Sacrifice of the Mass, Sacrifice of praise, pure and holy Sacrifice).*

Because it makes the one Sacrifice of Christ the Saviour on the Cross present and efficacious here and now, though in a bloodless way (that is a non-violent way).







The Eucharist also expresses the offering that those who participate in the Holy Mass make of themselves to the Father in union with the Sacrifice of Christ.



### *Holy and Divine Liturgy.*

The entire liturgy of the Church finds its center and its highest expression in the celebration of this Sacrament.



The Eucharist is the “source and summit of the whole Christian life”. All the Sacraments, like all the ministries of the Church and its apostolic works, are strictly united and ordered to the Holy Eucharist which contains all the spiritual riches of the Church, namely to Christ, our Passover.





### *Most Holy Sacrament.*

It is called this because it is the Sacrament of sacraments. When we use this name we mean the consecrated Eucharistic species which is reserved in the tabernacle.



### *Holy Communion.*

When we eat his Body, Christ unites us with himself and among us, making just one family.





*The Bread of Angels, the Bread of Heaven.*

When we use these expressions we speak about the special nature of this gift which has been given to us by Jesus.









***Viaticum.***

This is a word which describes the Holy Communion that is given to a person who is seriously ill, to strengthen that person in a time of sickness and, in his or her last moments of life, to accompany that person in the journey to the next life.





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## Why does the Eucharist have so many names?

The variety of names helps us to appreciate the immense richness of the Eucharist. It is so rich in meaning that it is also called *the Mystery of Faith*.

### In what sense is it a Mystery of faith?



The Eucharist is a Mystery in the sense that it is so rich in content and has so many qualities and potential that we cannot fully understand it.

It is a Mystery of Faith in the sense that faith allows us to:



recognize with gratitude that in the Eucharist Jesus Christ makes himself really present with his Body and Blood, his Soul and Divinity;



receive Holy Communion in a fruitful way;



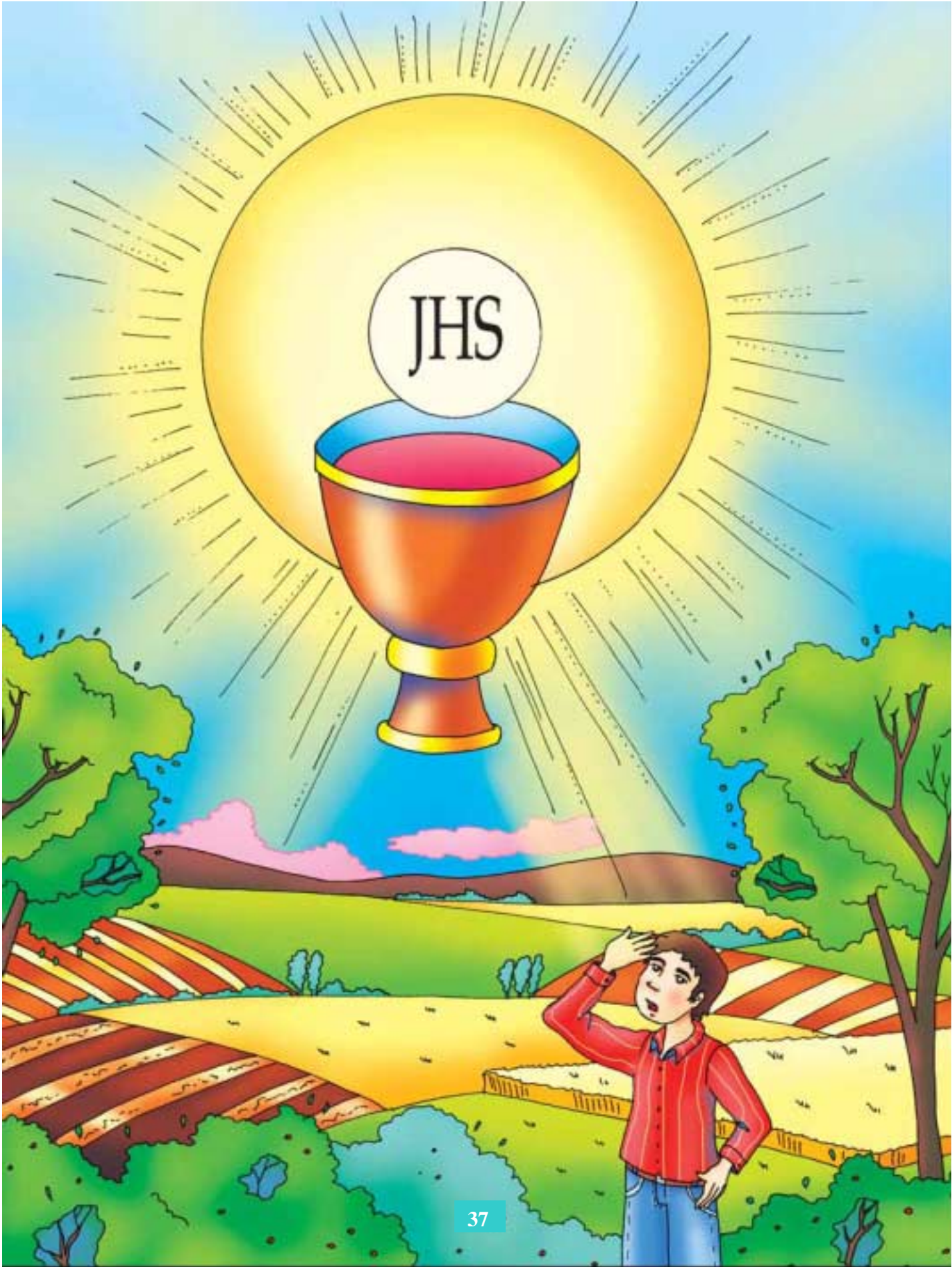
find all the essential and fundamental elements of our Catholic faith in the Eucharist and to profess it in our lives.



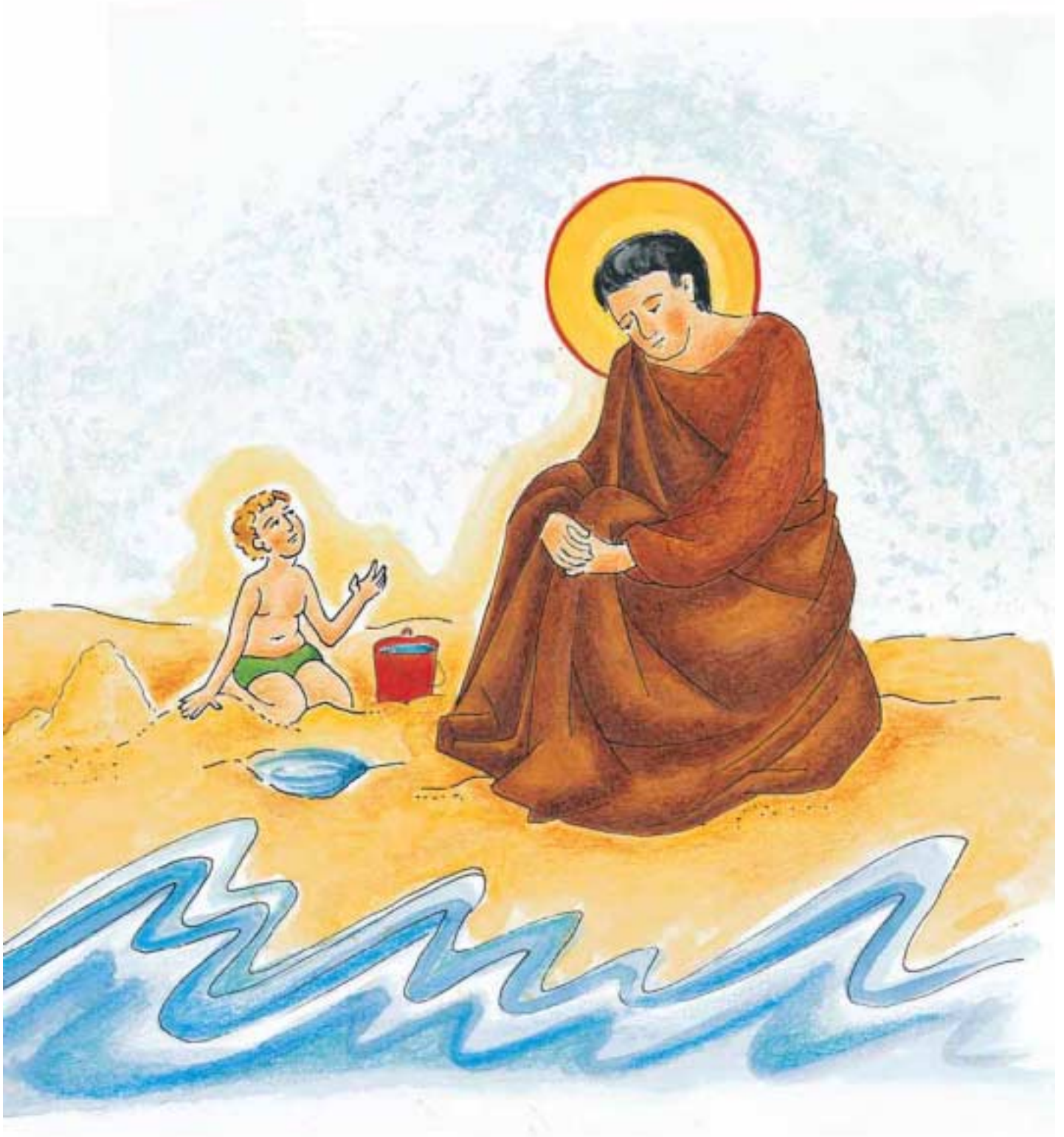
The Eucharist is a mystery to be believed, to be celebrated and to be lived as the Church, who received it as an incomparable gift from Jesus himself, believes, celebrates and lives it (Cfr. Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*).

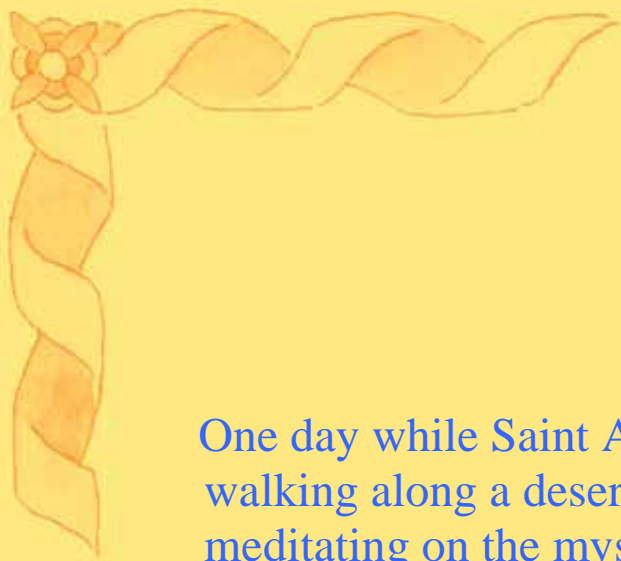


For this reason when we speak of *Mystery*, we are not talking about something that does not exist, but we mean something that is so great and rich that our minds are unable to understand or explain it fully. It is something so bright that our eyes are not able to perceive it properly (it is like the brightness of the sun, for example).









One day while Saint Augustine was walking along a deserted beach he was meditating on the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Then he saw a young child who was trying to empty all the water from the sea into a hole he had dug in the sand. The Saint pointed out to him in a gentle way that all this effort from him was going to be completely useless, but the young child told him that he was in fact an angel and explained to him that even one single hole in the sand could contain all the water in the sea more easily than the human mind would be able to comprehend the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. The Eucharist too is one of the principal mysteries of our Faith that we will never be able to understand fully in this life.

