

Deepening Spirituality Through the Holy Eucharist

Hanjam Eugene M. Habitan 

Author Information:

University of Santo Tomas- Legazpi
Legazpi City, Philippines

Correspondence:

hanjameugene.habitan@ust-legazpi.edu.ph

Article History:

Date Received: June 4, 2026

Date Revised: June 23, 2026

Date Accepted: June 23, 2026

Date Published: June 29, 2026

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20987267>

Document ID: 2026IJROMS0175

Recommended Citation:

Habitan, H. E. M. (2026). *Deepening Spirituality Through the Holy Eucharist*. *International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(5), 304–320.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20987267>

Abstract. Limited scholarly attention has been given to how contemporary tertiary students experience the Holy Eucharist within Catholic higher education settings. This study addressed this gap by examining how participation in the sacrament relates to the spiritual development of students, both individually and communally. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was utilized. The quantitative phase involved a survey administered to 504 second-year Religious Education students to determine their levels of understanding, appreciation, and lived experiences of the Holy Eucharist. The qualitative phase followed, consisting of semi-structured interviews with 100 purposively selected participants to obtain an in-depth account of their lived experiences and spiritual reflections. Results of the quantitative phase indicated that a substantial proportion of respondents (78%) agreed that participation in the Holy Eucharist provides spiritual nourishment, strengthens their relationship with God, and enhances engagement in communal worship. The qualitative findings further elaborated these results, revealing that students consistently associated Eucharistic participation with experiences of peace, fulfillment, and spiritual renewal. These experiences were attributed to moments of reflection, strengthened communal belonging, and recognition of the sacrament's formative and transformative significance in daily life. Participants likewise reported an increased disposition toward authentic Christian living following active participation in the sacrament. The study concludes that participation in the Holy Eucharist plays a significant role in fostering the spiritual development of tertiary students by reinforcing both personal faith formation and communal ecclesial identity. The findings highlight the need for sustained educational and pastoral interventions that promote meaningful Eucharistic engagement and support ongoing spiritual formation within Catholic academic institutions.

Keywords: Eucharistic Spirituality; Holy Eucharist; Religious Education; Spirituality; Student engagement

Introduction

Spirituality plays a crucial role in shaping human life, particularly within religious communities where faith practices are deeply intertwined with daily living. In Christianity, spirituality is both a personal and communal journey, often expressed through deep connections with God, meaningful participation in religious rituals, and the cultivation of values that guide behavior. Etymologically, the word "spirituality" originates from the Latin word "spirare," meaning "to breathe," which symbolizes life and connection with the divine (Bigger, n.d.). This notion is echoed in various theological traditions, where the Holy Spirit (pneuma in Greek, ruah in Hebrew) is understood as both the breath of life and the presence of God that animates the soul. Spirituality, therefore, involves a transformative process shaped by divine encounters, personal reflection, and communal belonging (Betakore et al., 2022; Lareza Jr., 2024).

Christian spirituality has historically been anchored in sacramental life, particularly in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, which is central to Catholic worship and identity. As emphasized by Jimenez (2020), the Eucharist is not merely symbolic but is considered the highest form of communal prayer, reflecting the most intimate union with God. For centuries, it has served as the "source and summit" of Christian life, as stated in Lumen Gentium (11), and affirmed by Obiorah (2023), who described the Eucharist as "the perfection of spiritual life." It represents both the beginning and ultimate goal of Christian spirituality—nourishing the faithful and directing their lives toward God (EWTN, n.d.). Appiah-Kubi (2021) adds that the term "eucharist" means "thanksgiving," and the celebration recalls Christ's work in creation, redemption, and sanctification. It is also referred to by many names, including Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, and the Most Blessed Sacrament, each highlighting different aspects of its theological depth (Appiah-Kubi, 2021; Youvan, 2024).

Through the doctrine of transubstantiation, the Church teaches that the bread and wine truly become the body and blood of Christ. This belief is held by the majority of Filipino Catholics, with 97% affirming the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist (Bernardo, 2024). According to Anike et al. (2021) and Rahardja (2021), the Eucharist is spiritual food that nourishes the soul, providing grace, strength, and a deeper

communion with God. However, despite the Eucharist's central role in Catholic life and its theological richness, recent observations reveal a growing gap between doctrine and practice, especially among students. Some show reverence and commitment, while others exhibit indifference, arriving late to Mass, using mobile phones, or treating the celebration casually.

This contrast between expected and actual behavior is especially concerning in Catholic educational institutions that promote active participation in the liturgy. The Eucharist, as noted by Embalsado et al. (2024), is meant to foster communion not only with God but also with others. However, when students fail to internalize its meaning, the sacrament risks becoming a mere routine. In Catholic schools like Divine Word College of Legazpi (DWCL), regular institutional Masses, first Friday devotions, and Sunday Mass sponsorships are held to nurture Eucharistic awareness. However, participation patterns reveal that many students lack deep understanding, proper appreciation, or spiritual preparation.

Research in recent years supports this trend. Anike (2021) found that most Catholics in Southeastern Nigeria recognize the spiritual importance of the Eucharist, suggesting a strong link between belief and spiritual growth. In contrast, Vide Rodríguez and Wroblewski (2022) observed that students in a Spanish Catholic school, despite their religious background, often lacked even basic knowledge about the Eucharist and rarely attended Mass. Likewise, Garrido et al. (2024) revealed that some students participate without genuine spiritual readiness, highlighting a disconnection between outward practice and inner disposition. These findings suggest that while the Eucharist retains its theological and communal significance, its spiritual impact may not be fully realized by students if not accompanied by in-depth formation and pastoral support.

Although past studies have examined student attitudes and participation in the Eucharist, few have focused on how young Catholics, particularly tertiary students, experience, appreciate, and understand the Eucharist as a means of deepening their spirituality. This gap is especially relevant in the context of Catholic higher education, where students are expected to integrate their faith into their academic and personal lives. Thus, this study explores the Eucharistic spirituality of tertiary religious education students at Divine Word College of Legazpi (DWCL), focusing on how they understand, appreciate, and experience the Holy Eucharist in their daily lives. The findings will provide empirical data to inform DWCL's campus ministry and religious education programs, helping religious educators and pastoral leaders strengthen Eucharistic formation and promote active, meaningful participation in the sacrament. Ultimately, the study aims to enhance students' spiritual development and ensure that the Eucharist continues to serve as a true source and summit of their Christian life.

Research Questions

This study explores how tertiary religious education students deepen their spirituality through active engagement with the Holy Eucharist at Divine Word College of Legazpi.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is the spirituality of Divine Word College of Legazpi (DWCL) students manifested in their understanding and appreciation of the Holy Eucharist?
2. How are students' understanding and appreciation of the Holy Eucharist interconnected with their lived experiences in its celebration?
3. What measures may be proposed to deepen students' appreciation and practice of the Holy Eucharist?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to second-year Catholic tertiary religious education students enrolled during the academic year 2024–2025 at Divine Word College of Legazpi. It focuses on their understanding, appreciation, and lived experiences of the Holy Eucharist. This study is delimited to this specific group and sacrament, thereby excluding non-Catholic students and other sacraments from the data gathering and analysis.

Literature Review

The Holy Eucharist has long been recognized as a central sacrament within the Catholic faith, serving both as a source of spiritual nourishment and as a communal act of worship (Emelu, 2024). Numerous studies have explored the theological significance of the Eucharist and its role in shaping Christian spirituality (Anike, 2021; Migut, 2023). Anike and Migut emphasize preparation practices such as retreats, recollections, and sacramental confession to deepen participants' appreciation and reception of the sacrament. These approaches underscore the Eucharist's function as spiritual food for the soul, fostering personal sanctity and communal faith. Despite this foundational understanding, there remains a persistent concern regarding the declining participation and engagement of young Catholics, particularly tertiary students, in Eucharistic celebrations

(Emelu, 2024). Several studies attribute this decline to factors such as inadequate theological understanding, lack of experiential connection, and insufficient pastoral initiatives aimed at this demographic (Toyon, 2021; Zhou et al., 2024). Toyon's work using mixed methods highlights the need for integrative approaches that combine cognitive understanding and experiential learning in religious education to sustain faith engagement. Furthermore, most existing research has focused on generalized populations or has studied Catholics in broad contexts without particular attention to the unique experiences of tertiary religious education students within their institutional environments. This generalization limits the applicability of findings to target subgroups like those at Divine Word College of Legazpi (DWCL), where institutional practices and campus culture uniquely shape spiritual engagement with the Holy Eucharist. Moreover, previous studies typically emphasize either quantitative assessments of attendance and perception or qualitative accounts of spiritual experience, seldom integrating both dimensions to provide a holistic understanding. This gap points to the necessity of mixed-methods research designs, like the explanatory sequential approach employed in the current study, which first quantifies understanding and appreciation and then deepens insight through personal narratives. In conclusion, while extant literature affirms the centrality of the Holy Eucharist in Christian spirituality and acknowledges challenges in student engagement, there remains a clear gap concerning the contextualized understanding, appreciation, and lived experiences of tertiary religious education students within Catholic higher education institutions like DWCL. This study bridges this gap by examining these dimensions in a targeted population, thereby contributing to the design of pastoral and educational interventions that effectively deepen students' Eucharistic spirituality.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Toyon, 2021) to examine tertiary students' understanding, appreciation, and lived experiences of the Holy Eucharist. Quantitative data were collected and analyzed initially, followed by qualitative interviews that further explored and explained the survey results.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was employed to select Catholic second-year students enrolled in Religious Education (Rel Ed 104) who had completed prerequisite courses (Rel Ed 101, 102, and 103). For the quantitative phase, 504 students completed the survey. A quota sample of 100 students was purposively selected from these respondents for qualitative interviews, representing 20% of the survey participants. From the 504 survey respondents, a purposive sub-sample of exactly 100 Catholic students was selected for the qualitative phase. Due to logistical considerations, these interviews were conducted as individual semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 15- 20 minutes each. Data saturation was monitored throughout the interview process, and no new themes emerged after the 85th interview, confirming sufficient coverage.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Divine Word College of Legazpi (DWCL), Philippines, a Catholic higher education institution where spiritual formation and religious education are integral to student life. The campus culture and institutional practices provide a unique environment shaping students' engagement with the Holy Eucharist.

Research Participants

Participants consisted of Catholic second-year college students officially enrolled in Rel Ed 104 for the academic year 2024–2025. The total enrollment was 795 students. Only those affirming Catholic faith and consenting to participate were included. Consent was obtained after fully informing students of the study objectives and voluntary nature of participation.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-designed semi-structured questionnaire (*Eucharistic Spirituality Scale of Tertiary Religious Education Students*) comprising four parts: demographic profile, 5-point Likert-scale items (1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree) on understanding and appreciation of the Holy Eucharist, a Check-All-That-Apply (CATA) section on lived experiences, and an interview guide for qualitative data. A panel of experts, including experienced religious education professors and a priest serving as director of the Center for Spirituality and Mission, evaluated the instrument to establish its content validity and face validity. A pilot test was conducted with 25 students, yielding Cronbach's alpha = 0.87 for internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. During the quantitative phase, survey questionnaires were administered electronically through Google Forms, which participants accessed via QR codes. The survey targeted all Catholic students enrolled in Religious Education 104 (Rel Ed 104) who met the inclusion criteria and voluntarily consented to participate. Employing total population sampling, the study obtained responses from 504 students. Following the quantitative phase, a qualitative phase was conducted to further explore and explain the survey findings. A purposive sample comprising approximately 20% of the survey respondents was selected for semi-structured interviews based on their willingness to participate and their potential to provide rich and relevant insights regarding their understanding, appreciation, and lived experiences of the Holy Eucharist. The interviews were conducted through scheduled sessions, audio-recorded with participants' informed consent, and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Several challenges were encountered during data collection, including occasional class disruptions and internet connectivity issues that affected participants' access to the online survey and interview sessions. Despite these limitations, appropriate measures were taken to ensure the completeness and integrity of the data.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: To what extent is the spirituality of Divine Word College of Legazpi (DWCL) students manifested in their understanding and appreciation of the Holy Eucharist?

Table 1. Understanding of the Holy Eucharist Items with Mean and Verbal Interpretation (N=504)

Indicator	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Understanding of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist		
3. The Holy Eucharist is an act of thanksgiving to God's love.	4.33	SA
12. I understand that the Holy Mass is a way to communicate with God.	4.46	SA
13. I understand that the Holy Eucharist is a central act of worship.	4.23	SA
14. I understand the significance of the Holy Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life and spirituality.	4.18	A
15. I understand that Jesus is present in the form of bread and wine through transubstantiation.	4.22	SA
Spiritual Nourishment and Growth		
4. I know that the Holy Mass helps me to grow spiritually.	4.48	SA
5. I know that receiving Holy Communion nourishes my soul.	4.35	SA
6. I know that worshipping God in the Holy Mass makes me feel strong in faith.	4.40	SA
7. I know that worshipping God in the Holy Mass makes me feel strong in Hope.	4.41	SA
8. I know that worshipping God in the Holy Mass makes me feel strong in charity.	4.23	SA
19. I understand that the Holy Eucharist is a preparation for eternal life.	4.16	A
Worship and Community		
2. I know that the Holy Eucharist is the highest form of prayer.	4.12	A
10. I know that the Holy Mass helps me to be in communion with fellow believers.	4.19	A
18. I understand that the Holy Eucharist is a communal celebration of the faithful around the Lord's table.	4.19	A
Rituals and Obligations		
1. I know the different parts and variations of the Holy Mass.	3.73	A
9. I know that the Priests are the only minister to celebrate the Holy Mass.	3.57	A
11. I understand that attending the Holy Mass on Sundays is obeying God's commandment.	4.17	A

The survey results, summarized in Table 1, offer a detailed evaluation of students' understanding of the Holy Eucharist, categorized into four thematic clusters: Understanding the Holy Eucharist, Spiritual Nourishment and Growth, Worship and Community, and Rituals and Obligations. Each cluster was analyzed using mean scores and corresponding verbal interpretations, which reflected students' perspectives on the theological, spiritual, and communal significance of the Eucharist within the Catholic faith. The findings indicate that students demonstrate a deep awareness of the Holy Eucharist's meaning, particularly in terms of its spiritual and doctrinal dimensions. In the first cluster, Understanding the Holy Eucharist, students showed strong agreement with statements highlighting the Holy Eucharist as an act of thanksgiving to God's love. They affirmed understanding of transubstantiation, indicating a solid grasp of the doctrine of Jesus Christ's real presence. The Eucharist's role as the focal point of Catholic worship was also well recognized, suggesting that students view it as vital to their religious life. The second cluster, focusing on Spiritual Nourishment and Growth, further revealed the Eucharist's impact on students' inner lives. Mean scores demonstrated that students associate the Eucharist with personal and communal growth. Participation in the Holy Mass was

viewed as a source of spiritual strength, fostering faith, hope, and charity. At the same time, Holy Communion was regarded as essential for soul nourishment. This reflects a deeply felt spiritual connection to the sacrament. In the Worship and Community cluster, the data showed that students value the Eucharist for its communal aspects. The Holy Mass was viewed as the highest form of prayer and a means of uniting believers. The Eucharistic celebration was seen not only as worship but as a communal gathering that strengthens solidarity among members of the faith community. In contrast, the Rituals and Obligations cluster revealed mixed results. While students recognized the obligation of attending Sunday Mass, they expressed less familiarity with the parts of the Mass and the priest's role, indicating areas where further catechesis may be beneficial. Overall, the results indicate that DWCL students possess a strong theological and spiritual understanding of the Eucharist, although their grasp of ritual and ecclesiastical details is less developed. This aligns with the findings of Abante (2020), who emphasized the effectiveness of religious education while calling for enhanced teaching strategies to deepen engagement. The data support the application of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), where participation in the Mass serves as a concrete experience leading to reflection and deeper understanding. Likewise, the Transformative Learning Theory of Mezirow (1978) underscores how critical reflection on these experiences can reshape students' views and foster spiritual transformation. Hence, initiatives such as workshops, discussions, and reflections are recommended to enrich both theological knowledge and lived faith.

Table 2. Appreciating the Holy Eucharist Items with Mean and Verbal Interpretation (N=504)

Indicator	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Ceremonies and Rituals		
1. I appreciate the ceremonies and rituals in the Eucharistic Celebration.	4.31	SA
2. I appreciate the parts and variations of the Holy Mass.	4.31	SA
6. I appreciate the Penitential Act (I confess.../Lord, Have Mercy) of the Eucharistic Celebration.	4.30	SA
8. I appreciate the singing of Gloria/ Glory to God in the Highest during the Holy Mass.	4.39	SA
11. I appreciate the offertory in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, where I am able to offer my sacrifices.	4.24	SA
Community and belonging		
4. I appreciate the sense of community and belonging in the Holy Mass.	4.32	SA
5. I appreciate the Holy Mass because it helps me to thank God with my fellow believers.	4.36	SA
7. Even though I am a sinner, I appreciate the Holy Mass because no one judges me during the celebration.	4.33	SA
Spiritual Growth and Reflection		
3. I appreciate the Holy Mass because it helps me to remember Christ's sacrificial love for humanity.	4.38	SA
12. I appreciate that the Holy Eucharist is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God.	4.35	SA
13. I appreciate that the Holy Eucharist helps me deepen my spirituality.	4.35	SA
19. I appreciate Christ's unconditional love in the Holy Eucharist.	4.42	SA
20. I appreciate Christ's self- giving in the Holy Eucharist.	4.39	SA
Experiential Aspects		
9. I appreciate the Readings and the Gospel in the Holy Mass.	4.36	SA
10. I appreciate the Holy Mass when a deacon or priest relates his homily to real-life situations.	4.46	SA
15. I appreciate the deep sense of peace, tranquility, and relief in the Eucharistic Celebration	4.34	SA
16. I appreciate the religious and spiritual uplifting experience in the Eucharistic Celebration.	4.31	SA
Grace and Healing		
14. I appreciate the Holy Eucharist because God is still giving us graces and blessings, even though we are not worthy of receiving them.	4.40	SA
17. I appreciate the opportunity to receive the Body and Blood of Christ regularly.	4.24	SA
18. I appreciate that the Holy Eucharist is a source of grace and healing.	4.38	SA

Based on survey data collected from 504 respondents, students demonstrated a consistently high appreciation of the Holy Eucharist across several thematic clusters: Ceremonies and Rituals, Spiritual Growth and Reflection, Experiential Aspects, and Grace and Healing. The first cluster, Communities and Rituals, showed a high mean score emphasizing students' deep reverence for the structured elements of the Mass. Rituals such as the singing of the Gloria and the Penitential Act were particularly appreciated, indicating that these ceremonial practices enhance their engagement and sense of reverence during the Eucharistic celebration. The communal dimension of the Holy Mass was also highly valued. Students reported a strong

sense of belonging and spiritual connection, with a mean appreciation score of 4.32 for community dynamics. Shared gratitude and feelings of non-judgmental acceptance were recognized as vital elements that foster spiritual solidarity. These findings highlight how the Eucharist serves not only as an individual act of worship but also as a collective experience that strengthens relationships among the faithful and nurtures communal faith. In the cluster focused on Spiritual Growth and Reflection, students demonstrated a profound understanding of the theological depth of the Holy Eucharist. The Mass was seen as a reminder of Christ's sacrificial love and participants acknowledged the Eucharist as a sacrifice of praise and a means for spiritual deepening. This reveals that the sacrament is appreciated not only as a ritual but also as a transformative spiritual experience that facilitates inner growth and faith maturity. Experiential aspects, particularly the Readings, Gospel, and Homily, were also highly valued. Students expressed strong appreciation for the relevance of homilies that connect theological teachings to everyday life. The acknowledgment of the importance of scriptural readings further suggests that meaningful and relatable messages contribute significantly to their understanding and personal connection with the Eucharistic celebration. These insights align with the Experiential Learning Theory of David Kolb (1984) and John Dewey (1938), which emphasize learning through meaningful reflection on direct experiences. Lastly, the cluster of Grace and Healing revealed that students view the Eucharist as a profound source of spiritual nourishment and renewal. A high mean score of 4.40 indicated strong appreciation for the sacramental graces received during the Mass. Even amidst feelings of unworthiness, students affirmed the importance of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, reflecting an understanding of the Eucharist as both a source of healing and sustenance. The results align with Jack Mezirow's (1978) Transformative Learning Theory, demonstrating how reflective Eucharistic experiences can transform beliefs and foster deeper spiritual practices. In conclusion, the findings confirm that students' appreciation of the Holy Eucharist is rooted in a complex interplay of ritual, community, spirituality, personal experience, and transformative grace, providing strong support for educational efforts that deepen liturgical understanding and participation.

Research Question 2: How are students' understanding and appreciation of the Holy Eucharist interconnected with their lived experiences in its celebration?

Table 3. *Spiritual Manifestation with GWA and Verbal Interpretation (N= 504)*

Spiritual Manifestation	GWA	Verbal Interpretation
Understanding the Holy Eucharist	4.21	Strongly Agree
Appreciating the Holy Eucharist	4.35	Strongly Agree

Theologians at the Catholic University of Lublin, according to Migut (2023), argue that spirituality manifests in the way people think, feel, judge, and act. This suggests that self-reported spiritual manifestation which stems from an understanding and appreciation of the Holy Eucharist serves as a starting point for assessing an individual's extent of spirituality. Table 3 illustrates the extent to which DWCL students' spirituality is manifested in their understanding and appreciation of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The large amounts of data collected in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that the respondents (N = 504) exhibit strong spiritual manifestations through their understanding and appreciation of the Holy Eucharist. The descriptive analysis of the Holy Eucharist revealed a General Weighted Average (GWA) of 4.21, indicating a strong agreement among participants. Notable areas of understanding presented in Table 1 include spiritual growth through the Holy Mass, communication with God, and recognition of Christ as the Lamb of God. The data suggest that respondents possess a deep theological understanding of the sacrament's significance in their spiritual lives and its role in Christian worship. The appreciation dimension manifests an even higher level of spiritual manifestation with a GWA of 4.35. The strongest expressions of appreciation were observed in relating homilies to real-life situations, recognizing Christ's unconditional love, and acknowledging God's grace despite human unworthiness. Above all, these data indicate that participants manifested their extent of spirituality not only by intellectually understanding the Holy Eucharist but also by deeply valuing its spiritual significance in their lives. The consistently high means across both understanding and appreciation dimensions, predominantly falling in the "strongly agree" category, shows a strong spiritual connection to the lived experiences, practices, and beliefs of the study participants.

Research Question 3: What measures may be proposed to deepen students' appreciation and practice of the Holy Eucharist?

Table 4. Frequency in Attending the Holy Mass (N=504)

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I consistently attend the Holy Mass four times a month.	75	14.90%
I sometimes attend the Holy Mass (thrice a month).	147	29.17%
I rarely attend the Holy Mass (once a month or less).	179	35.52%
I occasionally go to Holy Mass (during Feasts, Baptism, Marriage and Funerals).	101	20.00%
Others: No comment	2	0.40%
Others: I attend mass every Saturday with my family it's called Anticipated Mass - 5:30 PM	1	0.20%
Others: During Sundays	1	0.20%
Others: Every Sunday and whatever event of the Holy Mass	1	0.20%
Others: I rarely attend the Holy Mass once a year but it doesn't mean I don't believe in God. I always pray in our house.	1	0.20%
Others: Once a month & I occasionally go to Holy Mass, Feast, Baptism, Marriage and Funerals.	1	0.20%
Others: N/A	1	0.20%
Others: All the time as a member of the DWCL Music Ministry	1	0.20%
Others: I serve during the Holy Mass at the same time I attend	1	0.20%
Others: Once a year	1	0.20%
Others: I rarely attend the Mass	1	0.20%
Others: When the school requires me to attend the Holy Mass.	1	0.20%
Others: When I am required to	1	0.20%
Others: Thrice a year	1	0.20%
Others: I am a member of DWCL music ministry, I always attend institutional Masses in our school.	1	0.20%
Others: only when the academic institution wills it for, I have an own private church with slightly different practices.	1	0.20%
Others: I consistently attend the Holy Mass every first Sunday and sometimes if I have free time, I always go to church lighting a candle.	1	0.20%
Others: from school I always go to church to light a candle and give thanks to God.	1	0.20%

Table 4 shows that students "rarely attend the Holy Mass (once a month or less) 35.52% 'sometimes attend the Holy Mass (thrice a month)" 29.17% and 'occasionally go to Holy Mass (during feasts, baptism, marriage, and funerals) 20%. This highlights the need to increase students' attendance at Holy Mass. While the categories provide a general indication of the frequency of attendance at the Eucharistic Celebration, the open-ended responses also offer a rich insight into the respondents' attendance and motivation for attending Holy Mass. These findings align with the study of Vide and Wroblewski (2022), which highlights that many students attend the Holy Mass only a few times a year, and a notable percentage are entirely disconnected from the celebration. This is mainly because they do not benefit from the spiritual capital associated with the Eucharistic Celebration. However, a study by Garrido et al. (2024) in the Philippines reveals that students have a strong passion for attending Holy Mass, demonstrating a willingness to engage meaningfully in the celebration despite external influences. Thus, the study by Madrigal et al. (2020) suggests that to foster a positive attitude toward attending Mass, students must be immersed in parish life. This immersion reinforces the importance of community worship and spiritual engagement among students. This is supported by Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which emphasizes that experiential activities can lead to enhanced understanding, appreciation, skill acquisition, and spiritual growth among students.

Table 5. Preparations before the Holy Mass (N=504)

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I make sure to maintain proper grooming.	241	47.80%
I make sure to dress appropriately and decently.	430	85.30%
I make sure to do Eucharistic fasting.	34	6.70%
I make sure to pray before the Holy Mass.	147	29.20%
I make sure to read the readings of the day before the Holy Mass.	28	5.60%
I make sure to arrive early before the Holy Mass.	257	51.00%
I make sure to attend the Holy Mass with proper intention.	365	72.40%
I make sure that I have a good examination of conscience before attending the Holy Mass.	139	27.60%
I make sure to put aside distractions before going to the Holy Mass.	286	56.70%
Others: None	1	0.20%
Others: N/A	1	0.20%
Others: If I am going to serve, I make sure that the vestments, credence table and equipment are all set and ready to go.	1	0.20%
Others: I only attended when my mother ask for me to do so.	1	0.20%

This section presents the results from the Check-All-That-Apply (CATA) questionnaire on how respondents prepare for the Holy Mass, where respondents choose different categories that apply to them. Table 5 presents the quantitative results of the respondents' preparations for the Holy Mass. Based on the CATA survey of 504 respondents; most students demonstrated a focus on practical and external preparations before attending the Holy Mass. A significant number (430) reported dressing appropriately and decently, while 365 emphasized attending the Mass with proper intention. Other common practices included putting aside distractions (286 respondents), arriving early (257), and maintaining proper grooming (241). However, fewer students engaged in deeper spiritual preparations: only 147 prayed before Mass, and just 34 practiced Eucharistic fasting, despite its requirement in Canon Law (Canon # 919). A small number also valued reading the day's Scripture in advance (28) or preparing sacred vessels, which suggests some students are actively involved in church activities. Some respondents indicated the questions did not apply to them, revealing a diversity in levels of involvement. Overall, the findings suggest that most students prioritize external readiness over deeper spiritual preparation when attending the Holy Mass. To address this, Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory could be applied to promote more meaningful engagement. This theory emphasizes active participation and reflection, which could be encouraged through involvement in church-based community service or spiritual formation programs. Such activities offer opportunities for personal transformation, aligning with Bleiler's (2023) findings that using transformative learning in worship contexts can foster significant changes in spiritual perspectives and deepen faith engagement.

Table 6. Level of Engagement and Practices in the Holy Mass (N=504)

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I participate in the singing of hymns and responses in the Holy Mass.	377	74.80%
I listen attentively to the readings and prayers in the Holy Mass.	287	56.90%
I receive Holy Communion with proper disposition and intention.	286	56.70%
I pray silently after receiving Holy Communion.	389	77.20%
I do not converse with my seatmates during the Holy Mass.	161	31.90%
I do not leave the Holy Mass until the Final blessing.	332	65.90%
I am fully conscious in the Eucharistic Celebration.	184	36.50%
Others: N/A	1	0.20%
Others: if I do not go to confession, I will not receive the holy communion	1	0.20%
Others: I copy what my mother do.	1	0.20%
Others: Take notes of the homily and reflect on it at home.	1	0.20%

The results of the 504 respondents of the questionnaire of the CATA item: What do you do during the Holy Mass? This item allows respondents to select multiple items they engage with during the celebration of the Holy Mass. Table 6 below provides insights into the standard level of engagement of the respondents. Based on the results of the CATA survey involving 504 respondents, the data in Table 6 revealed a generally high level of student engagement in the Holy Mass. A significant number of students actively participated in key liturgical elements: 389 indicated that they "pray silently after receiving the Holy Communion," 287 stated they "listen attentively to the readings and prayers," and 377 confirmed they join in the "singing of hymns and responses." These responses reflect a strong outward involvement and point toward a deeper spiritual connection. Moreover, 332 students reported they "do not leave the Holy Mass until the final blessing," demonstrating reverence for the entirety of the celebration. However, only 286 respondents claimed to receive Holy Communion with the proper disposition and intention, suggesting that some may lack full internal readiness for the sacrament. Despite these high levels of participation, there were indications of lapses in internal consciousness and discipline during the Mass. Only 184 respondents reported being "fully conscious during the Eucharistic Celebration," raising questions about potential distractions, limited understanding, or disengagement. Additionally, just 161 students said they "do not converse with their seatmates," suggesting that maintaining a reverent atmosphere remains a challenge for many. Open-ended responses further revealed varying levels of awareness and practice: some students expressed that they abstain from receiving Communion if they had not undergone the sacrament of confession demonstrating a solid understanding of Canon Law (1983), particularly Canon # 919, which instructs Catholics in a state of grave sin not to receive the Eucharist without prior confession. Others shared unique personal practices such as imitating a parent's behavior during the Mass or "taking notes of the Homily and reflecting it at home," reflecting individualized and meaningful spiritual habits. Overall, the findings reflect that DWCL students demonstrate substantial engagement in the Holy Mass, particularly in outward rituals, fulfilling part of the study's objectives related to their spiritual understanding of the Eucharist. However, the inconsistencies in internal preparedness and mindfulness indicate an uneven development in their spiritual maturity. Drawing from the Experiential Learning Theory of Kolb (1984) and Dewey (1938), meaningful participation in liturgical experiences fosters spiritual growth, while Mezirow's (1978) Transformative Learning Theory highlights the importance of personal reflection. These theoretical frameworks suggest that religious educators and church leaders can

enhance student spirituality by designing experiences that promote both active participation and reflective engagement, deepening students' appreciation and understanding of the Holy Eucharist.

Table 7. The Emotional and Spiritual Outcomes of the Holy Mass (N=504)

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I feel a deeper sense of spirituality a connection with God.	374	74.21%
I feel a sense of enlightenment.	363	72.02%
I feel a sense of challenge in putting my faith into practice.	213	42.26%
I feel a sense of mission and purpose in life.	261	52.79%
I feel a sense of joy and peace.	354	70.24%
I feel a sense of fulfillment and relief after attending the Holy Mass.	317	62.90%
I feel a sense of living out the gospel in my day-to-day life.	208	41.27%
Others: Same as usual	1	0.20%
Others: None	1	0.20%
Others: N/A	2	0.40%
Others: I feel hope and purpose in my life and to continue spreading the word of God	1	0.20%
Others: I feel at peace	1	0.20%
Others: Nothing, I need to reflect on my own first and process my thoughts	1	0.20%
Others: I don't feel anything	1	0.20%

The survey question, "How do you feel after Mass?" elicited responses from 504 respondents, allowing multiple selections and providing an open-ended response option. A significant portion of respondents reported positive emotional and spiritual outcomes from attending the Holy Mass. Table 7 presents the results of 504 respondents. The survey revealed that a large number of students experienced a deepened sense of spirituality and connection with God during the Holy Mass, with 374 respondents reporting this transformative feeling. Additionally, 363 students expressed a sense of enlightenment, while many also reported emotions such as joy and peace, indicating a strong emotional impact. Furthermore, 317 students noted feelings of fulfillment and relief, and 261 articulated a renewed sense of mission and purpose in their lives, showing how the Holy Mass served as both a spiritual and motivational experience. However, 213 respondents admitted to struggling with "putting their faith into practice," and a few students reported more neutral or even negative experiences, such as feeling "nothing" or describing the Mass as "same as usual." Despite this, others still highlighted moments of renewed hope, inner peace, or quiet reflection. These varied responses can be interpreted through the lens of Jack Mezirow's (1978) Transformative Learning Theory, which emphasizes how critical reflection can lead to a shift in personal perspectives. The strong positive reactions from many students suggest they may have undergone a process of inner reflection, allowing them to derive meaning, clarity, and a deeper connection to their faith. On the other hand, those who reported neutral or negative feelings may not have engaged in the same level of transformative reflection, highlighting the diversity of emotional and spiritual outcomes experienced during the Holy Mass.

Religious Practice and the Holy Eucharist

To gather more in-depth data from the survey, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews focusing on the students' self-perception of religiosity. Respondents were asked the question, "Would you consider yourself religious?" This prompted reflections that helped categorize their experiences under the theme of lived experiences in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Most of the students defined being religious as engaging in activities such as attending the Holy Mass, praying regularly, and actively participating in church events. These religious practices were understood not as mere rituals but as vital components of their identity and spirituality.

Participants expressed their spirituality primarily through regular participation in religious practices and active involvement in Church life. Many emphasized consistent engagement in devotional activities such as attending the Holy Mass, prayer routines, and Scripture reading as key expressions of their faith. One participant highlighted this regular practice as attending the Holy Mass every Sunday and maintaining personal prayer habits in daily life (S1, S4, S5). Others further demonstrated their spirituality through service in ecclesial ministries, particularly by participating in Church organizations such as LECOM (S99). Overall, the responses indicate that spirituality is experienced as both devotional consistency and active service within the faith community.

The responses reflect that DWCL students' religiosity is embedded in consistent participation in religious practices, which significantly shape their understanding and appreciation of the Holy Eucharist. This supports Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory, where reflective engagement leads to shifts in perspective, as well as Kolb's (1984) and Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theories, emphasizing learning through active participation. The study therefore recommends targeted initiatives, such as retreats and

workshops, to enhance students' understanding and commitment to the Holy Eucharist. Ultimately, the findings affirm that frequent engagement in the Holy Mass and other religious practices cultivates deeper connections with one's faith, nurtures spiritual growth, and fosters a collective sense of identity and meaning within the religious community.

Spirituality a Personal Connection with God

In an effort to understand students' self-perception of spirituality and its connection to their appreciation of the Holy Eucharist, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews. When asked, *"Would you consider yourself spiritual?"* the majority of the respondents affirmed their spirituality, emphasizing a personal and direct relationship with God. Their responses demonstrate that spiritual identity is nurtured through consistent religious practices such as prayer, attending the Holy Mass, listening to homilies, and engaging with God's teachings. These insights are categorized under the Lived Experience of the Holy Eucharist, reflecting how spirituality is deeply woven into the students' daily lives and personal faith journeys.

Participants shared that they consider themselves spiritual because:

"they have a deep, personal connection with God, which they nurture through prayer, attending the Holy Mass, listening to homilies, and engaging with God's teachings" – [S12, S13, S15, S16, S21, S38, S39, S40, S41, S70, S97, and S99].

Participants consistently reported that going to the chapel before class is primarily motivated by the desire to seek divine guidance, express gratitude, and prepare spiritually for academic responsibilities. Their responses suggest that this practice serves as a personal routine for grounding themselves in faith before facing daily challenges. One student explained that it is done *"to ask guidance from the Lord"* (S5, S19), while another highlighted its role in managing academic pressures such as quizzes and reporting tasks (S10). Others emphasized thanksgiving as a central purpose, with one participant stating it is *"to thank God for my answer in quiz, activity, exam, recitation"* (S20). Collectively, the responses indicate that chapel visitation functions as a form of spiritual preparation that fosters reflection, peace, and emotional readiness, helping students begin their day with a sense of clarity, courage, and reliance on God (S1, S2, S6, S8, S9, S11, S12, S13, S14, S17, S18).

These lived experiences demonstrate that students' spirituality transcends external religious observance and is instead anchored in a personal connection with God. Their actions—such as attending the chapel before classes, engaging in prayer, and practicing gratitude—reflect meaningful spiritual habits that support both emotional strength and personal purpose. These findings closely align with the research objectives, demonstrating that spirituality has a profound influence on students' understanding and appreciation of the Holy Eucharist. This is supported by Kolb's (1984) and Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theories, which assert that knowledge emerges through direct experience. Likewise, Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory suggests that students undergo a deepened sense of identity through critical reflection on their spiritual experiences. Regular practices, such as attending Mass and reflecting on daily blessings, foster psychological well-being, spiritual growth, and a deeper awareness of divine presence. Ultimately, students' reflections affirm the transformative power of spirituality in shaping their identities, faith journeys, and understanding of life's challenges through the lens of gratitude, purpose, and connection with God.

Religious Person vs. Spiritual Person

To gain insight into students' perceptions of faith, the researcher asked: *"What is the difference between a religious and a spiritual person?"* The responses consistently highlighted a distinction between the external and internal expressions of faith. Students demonstrated a clear understanding of the differences, often identifying religiousness with communal and ritualistic expressions, and spirituality with personal, internal connections with God. This distinction was categorized under their lived experiences about the Holy Eucharist, reflecting both theological understanding and personal reflection.

"A religious person follows church beliefs, attends the Holy Mass, participates in religious events, and engages in communal practices such as praying the rosary and novenas. On the other hand, a spiritual person nurtures a deep personal relationship with God, focusing on internal faith and personal experiences. While religious persons express their faith outwardly through rituals, spiritual persons cultivate inner connection with God, reflecting on their beliefs and living out their faith in a more personal and internalized manner." – [S3, S12, S13, S21, S22, S47, S68, S86, S98, and S99]

The interview responses revealed that students possess a nuanced understanding of the distinction between religious and spiritual identities. They recognized that religious individuals often demonstrate faith through outward practices such as attending the Holy Mass and joining communal worship, while spiritual individuals focus on inner growth, personal reflection, and a direct relationship with God. This distinction reinforces the idea that although the two may overlap, they operate on different levels—one communal, the other deeply personal.

These findings provide valuable insight into the research objective centered on understanding the spirituality of DWCL students in connection with the Holy Eucharist. It becomes evident that both external rituals and internal devotion significantly influence their appreciation of the sacrament. Their recognition of this duality aligns with Kolb's (1984) and Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theories, which emphasize learning through reflection on personal experiences. Additionally, Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory supports the idea that critical reflection can lead to shifts in one's spiritual perspective.

Understanding the difference between being religious and being spiritual allows students to reflect more deeply on their faith experiences. It helps them value both the communal aspects of their religious practices and the personal aspects of their spiritual journey. Through this reflective process, students gain transformative insights that lead to a deeper and more integrated appreciation of the Holy Eucharist and their ongoing spiritual development.

Faith in Holy Mass Through Religious Authority and Teachings

The Holy Eucharist is regarded as one of the most vital aspects of Catholic faith (Garrido et al., 2024). To explore this further, the researcher asked the respondents: *"Do you have faith in everything that you hear during the Holy Mass?"* The majority of the students responded affirmatively. Their answers revealed a deep trust in the teachings of the Catholic Church, emphasizing that their faith is anchored in the authority of religious leaders and the sacredness of the liturgy. These reflections are categorized under the key objectives of the study: understanding, appreciation, and lived experience of the Holy Eucharist.

The participants believe that the:

"teachings, prayers, and homilies delivered by the priest are sacred, rooted in the Gospel of Christ, and serve as a guide" – [S4, S5, S9, S10, S15, S18, S46, S69, S86].

The interview findings indicate that participants demonstrated a strong and enduring faith in the teachings conveyed during the Holy Mass. They view the words of the priest as sacred and divinely inspired, seeing them not merely as ceremonial elements but as essential guides for their spiritual journey. This affirms a deep connection to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church and highlights how their faith is strengthened through consistent participation in the Holy Eucharist. Furthermore, the students' understanding of the prayers, readings, and homilies enhances their appreciation of the Holy Mass. Recognizing the Gospel-based foundations of these teachings allows students to engage more meaningfully with the sacrament, transforming the Mass from routine participation into a spiritually enriching experience. This understanding also manifests in their lived experience, where communal worship reinforces faith and promotes spiritual growth through observation and participation. Ultimately, the interplay of understanding, appreciation, and lived experience supports the development of sustained faith among DWCL students. Their trust in religious authorities, paired with personal engagement in the Holy Eucharist, reflects a holistic approach to spiritual development within the Catholic community.

Challenges Encountered in Spirituality related to the Holy Eucharist

The *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963) encourages the faithful to participate in the Eucharistic Celebration with full sincerity and focus, seeking unity with Jesus Christ, the High Priest. In light of this, the researcher asked the students: *"What challenges have you encountered in your spirituality, especially in relation to the Holy Eucharist?"* A common theme emerged from the responses many students struggle with distractions and lack of focus during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. These difficulties interfere with their ability to fully engage with the sacrament and reflect a significant area of concern in the ongoing development of their spirituality.

To provide further context for the low level of internal consciousness reported in Table 6, where only 36.5% of students indicated that they were fully conscious during the Holy Eucharist, follow-up interviews were conducted. The findings revealed a recurring theme of environmental and cognitive distractions. Participants identified both internal and external factors that impeded their ability to maintain focus, remain mentally present, and actively participate in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. A common concern was environmental distraction, particularly noise and movement from others during Mass, as several respondents

noted “distractions, noises that prevent from listening and focusing” (S4, S15, S58, S59, S71, S91). This was reinforced by accounts of disturbances caused by conversations among attendees, which further disrupt concentration (S19, S36, S74). In addition to external factors, participants also reported internal challenges such as wandering thoughts and difficulty maintaining mental focus, with one student noting that “my mind because I always get distracted” (S29). Others added that fatigue and sleepiness also contribute to disengagement during the celebration (S21, S93). Overall, the responses suggest that both environmental interruptions and personal attentional difficulties affect students’ ability to fully engage and meaningfully participate in the Holy Eucharist (S14, S28, S54).

The interview findings clearly show that both internal and external distractions significantly hinder students’ ability to remain attentive and spiritually engaged during the Holy Mass. These challenges directly align with the study’s objectives, which aim to explore the depth of students’ spirituality and their appreciation of the Eucharist. Disruptions such as noise, wandering thoughts, and sleepiness prevent them from fully understanding the sacred meaning of the sacrament, thus weakening their connection to the spiritual experience. Kolb’s (1984) and Dewey’s (1938) experiential learning theories offer insight into these challenges, emphasizing that learning and by extension, spiritual growth emerges from direct and reflective engagement with experiences. Mezirow’s (1978) transformative learning theory also emphasizes the importance of critical reflection in reevaluating personal spiritual experiences, enabling students to identify and address the obstacles that hinder their focus during the Mass.

These findings underscore the importance of developing strategies to cultivate mindfulness, enhance attentiveness, and create an environment conducive to spiritual reflection. Through greater awareness and communal support, students can cultivate a more meaningful and focused participation in the Holy Eucharist. By addressing these barriers and embracing reflective practices, they not only enhance their appreciation of the sacrament but also strengthen their overall spiritual growth. This process reinforces that being mentally present is essential for a transformative Eucharistic experience one that goes beyond physical attendance to embody a deep, personal encounter with God.

Appreciating Deeply the Practice of the Holy Eucharist

To explore the depth of students’ appreciation for the Holy Eucharist, the researcher asked: “*What makes you deeply appreciate the practice of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist?*” The majority of responses emphasized that the sacrament significantly strengthens their relationship with God. Students consistently shared how participating in the Holy Eucharist nurtures their spirituality and brings them closer to the Divine. These responses align with the study’s focus on appreciation and lived experiences of the Holy Eucharist among DWCL students.

Participants consistently described the Holy Eucharist as a central means of strengthening and deepening their relationship with God. Their responses indicate a shared understanding that participation in the sacrament nurtures both faith and personal connection with the divine. One student expressed that it “deepens my relationship with God” (S1), while another emphasized that it “strengthens my faith in God” (S18), reflecting a common perception of spiritual growth through Eucharistic participation. Others further highlighted its relational impact, stating that it “brings me closer to God” (S22) and helps form a more concrete spiritual relationship (S60). Collectively, the responses suggest that engagement in the Holy Eucharist is experienced as a consistent pathway for deepening faith and strengthening one’s personal connection with God (S2, S53, S64, S84, S50).

These student narratives demonstrate that the Holy Eucharist plays a decisive role in shaping and enriching their spiritual lives. Through the sacrament, students experience a deeper connection with God, fostering a meaningful and personal faith journey. Their reflections fall under the categories of appreciation and lived experience in this study, revealing that participation in the Holy Eucharist is not just a religious obligation but a transformative encounter that strengthens their relationship with the Divine. These responses also align with the broader research objectives by illustrating how students’ spirituality is enhanced through their engagement in the sacrament. The findings suggest that a deeper appreciation of the Holy Eucharist can strengthen students’ faith, encourage more active participation in the Holy Mass, and promote the practice of Christian values in daily life. As students recognize the Eucharist as a meaningful encounter with Christ, they become more committed to prayer, worship, service, and community involvement. These results highlight the importance of providing continuous Eucharistic formation through Religious Education programs, liturgical activities, and spiritual enrichment initiatives to foster students’ holistic spiritual growth and faith development. In this way, the Holy Eucharist becomes not only a source of individual growth but also a catalyst for collective spiritual development within the DWCL community.

Deepening Eucharistic Appreciation and Practice

To explore how students can deepen their appreciation and practice of the Holy Eucharist, the researcher asked: *"What can be done to deepen your appreciation and practice of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist?"* The most common responses emphasized regular attendance and active participation in the Holy Mass. This affirms Sherman & Eusebio (2024) view that active participation in the Eucharist is the most essential action for Christians—an intentional and voluntary response to God's grace that calls for personal commitment. Students' answers reflect a clear understanding of the significance of the sacrament in nurturing their faith and spiritual lives.

Participants consistently emphasized active participation in the Holy Mass as the primary way of deepening their appreciation and practice of the Holy Eucharist. Their responses highlight that engagement is not limited to attendance alone but extends to attentive listening, reflection, and application of the liturgy in daily life. One participant stressed the importance of holistic engagement, stating the need to "attend the Holy Mass, listen to every reading, reflect on the homily without being distracted, and apply it to everyday life" (S1). Similarly, others underscored the importance of regular participation and lived application, noting that the Eucharist should be integrated into daily conduct and faith practice (S3, S7, S11, S19, S22, S28, S81, S94, S95, S100). Overall, the responses suggest that deeper Eucharistic appreciation is achieved through consistent attendance, attentive participation, and the translation of liturgical experience into concrete Christian living.

The responses reflect a spiritually grounded understanding of the Holy Eucharist, shaped by students' lived experiences and their desire to deepen their faith. By committing to regular Mass attendance and mindful participation, students actively engage in experiential learning, embracing the teachings of the Church through reflection and practice. In essence, students recognize that consistent engagement in the Holy Mass, accompanied by attentiveness to the readings and homilies, leads to a more profound appreciation of the Eucharist. Their responses highlight the transformative power of conscious and reflective participation, not only as a ritual but as a personal spiritual journey.

Additionally, many students connect their Eucharistic participation with complementary practices such as Bible reading and personal prayer. These practices help them internalize the teachings they hear during Mass and integrate them into everyday life. This reflective process fosters a stronger connection with their faith and strengthens their understanding of the sacrament's theological and spiritual significance. Ultimately, the integration of regular participation, active reflection, and spiritual discipline fosters a holistic appreciation of the Holy Eucharist. It supports not just personal growth but also nurtures a deeper, more purposeful relationship with God—one that extends beyond the celebration and into daily living.

Impact of Missing the Holy Eucharist in Spiritual Lives

Given that the Holy Eucharist empowers Christian spirituality (Anike et al., 2021), there is a significant impact on the spiritual lives of the believers whenever they miss participating in the Eucharistic Celebration. Based on the results of the interview with students, the most common response to missing the Holy Eucharist is a pervasive sense of guilt.

To further explain the finding in Table 4 that 40.3% of students reported rarely attending the Holy Eucharist, follow-up interviews were conducted to explore the experiences underlying this pattern. A prominent qualitative theme that emerged was guilt over missing Mass. Participants consistently expressed feelings of guilt and emotional discomfort when they were unable to attend the Holy Eucharist, suggesting that absence from the celebration is strongly associated with a perceived sense of spiritual responsibility. Many described guilt as stemming from a belief that they were not giving sufficient time or gratitude to God, as one participant shared, *"I feel guilty because after all the blessing He gave me I didn't even thank Him"* (S19). Others emphasized that this feeling extended beyond emotion to their relationship with God, with one stating that missing Mass *"makes me guilty and distant with God"* (S12). Collectively, these responses indicate that although a substantial proportion of students reported rarely attending the Holy Eucharist, many nonetheless viewed their absence as a moral and spiritual burden, often associated with feelings of incompleteness, loss of peace, and a weakened relationship with God (S1, S8, S9, S31, S46, S49, S57, S61, S65, S91, S100).

The survey results revealed that missing the Holy Eucharist has a significant impact on the spiritual lives of students, often resulting in feelings of guilt, emotional struggle, and a sense of disconnection from God, which may lead to internal conflicts and feelings of unworthiness. These findings underscore the crucial role of the Holy Eucharist in fostering and sustaining students' spirituality, indicating that regular participation is essential to maintain a healthy spiritual life. The findings suggest that regularly missing the Holy Eucharist may weaken students' spiritual growth, sense of connection with God, and participation in the faith community. Reduced engagement in the Eucharistic celebration can limit opportunities for spiritual nourishment, prayer, and reflection, potentially affecting the practice of Christian values in daily life. These results highlight the need for schools and Church communities to strengthen pastoral programs, Eucharistic

catechesis, and faith formation activities that encourage regular participation in the Holy Mass and foster a deeper spiritual life among students.

Holy Communion as Essential in Spiritual Nourishment

Holy Communion is the act of receiving the body and blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine through transubstantiation. According to Lovasik (2021), Holy Communion helps us to nourish our spiritual lives, just like food nourishes our bodies. It helps to keep our souls alive and safe. Based on the interview question, "*Are you bothered at all if you are unable to receive Holy Communion?*" The most common responses to the question "Why?" are affirmative.

Building on the quantitative finding in Table 1 that students viewed the Holy Mass as a means of spiritual growth, the qualitative phase explored how participants experienced and understood this belief in their daily lives. A recurring qualitative theme that emerged was the importance of receiving Holy Communion as spiritual nourishment. Participants expressed a strong sense of spiritual concern when they were unable to receive Holy Communion, describing it as an essential source of nourishment, grace, and strength for their faith. These responses suggest that students' recognition of the Holy Mass as spiritually formative is closely linked to the central role they attribute to Holy Communion in sustaining their relationship with God and supporting their ongoing spiritual growth. Their responses suggest that missing the sacrament is experienced not only as a personal discomfort but also as a perceived spiritual loss. One participant noted that it "provides nourishment for both my body and soul" (S1), while another simply described it as "food for the soul" (S35), reflecting a shared understanding of the Eucharist as essential spiritual sustenance. Collectively, the responses indicate that Holy Communion is viewed as central to maintaining a close relationship with Christ and sustaining one's spiritual life, with its absence creating a sense of incompleteness in their faith experience (S50, S65, S67, S92, S94).

The students' responses revealed a deep appreciation for receiving the Holy Communion, which they described as essential to their spiritual nourishment and well-being. Many expressed feeling incomplete or spiritually affected when they are unable to receive it, viewing the sacrament as "food for the soul" that nourishes both body and spirit. They also highlighted how Holy Communion strengthens their relationship with God and becomes a source of grace and renewal. The findings highlight that Holy Communion plays a vital role in sustaining students' spiritual nourishment by strengthening their relationship with God and reinforcing their faith life. Regular participation in the Eucharist provides grace, moral guidance, and inner renewal that support students in living out Christian values such as love, humility, and service. This implies the need for educational and pastoral programs that actively encourage frequent reception of Holy Communion through catechesis, liturgical formation, and spiritual activities, helping students recognize it as a central source of strength in their daily spiritual journey.

Influence of Receiving the Holy Eucharist

The Holy Eucharist helps us to deepen our relationship with the Triune God, strengthens our faith, and nurtures our spiritual lives (Orange, 2024). The majority of the respondents emphasized this: receiving the Holy Eucharist influences their faith by strengthening it and deepening their relationship with God. During the interview, the students provided narrative responses to the question, "How does receiving the Holy Eucharist influence your life?"

To further elucidate the finding in Table 1 that students recognized receiving the Holy Eucharist as strengthening their faith, hope, and charity, follow-up interviews were conducted to explore how this belief is manifested in their lived experiences. A recurring qualitative theme that emerged was the Holy Eucharist as a source of spiritual strength. Participants consistently described receiving the Eucharist as a practice that strengthened both their spiritual and personal lives, particularly by deepening their relationship with God and sustaining their faith amid life's challenges. Most responses highlight a shared perception that it serves as a source of spiritual reinforcement and personal encouragement during life's challenges. One participant explained that it "strengthens my faith, gives me hope and inspires me to live my life" (S4), while another emphasized that it "strengthens my faith and it helps me mentally during difficult challenges" (S5). These statements reflect a broader pattern in which the experience is not only spiritual but also psychologically supportive, helping individuals maintain resilience and meaning in daily life. Overall, the responses suggest that the practice functions as a holistic source of renewal, deepening connection with God while also positively shaping thoughts, emotions, and actions (S1, S2, S7, S13).

The results showed that students perceive receiving the Holy Eucharist as significantly influencing their spiritual lives and strengthens their relationship with God. Through participation in the sacrament, many respondents reported that their spirituality deepens and their faith is strengthened, with the Holy Eucharist transforming not only their spiritual lives but also their everyday actions. These findings align with the research

objective of deepening the spirituality of DWCL students by connecting their lived experiences with their faith. The findings indicate that receiving the Holy Eucharist has a strong influence on students' spiritual development, shaping their attitudes, moral decision-making, and commitment to faith-based living. Regular participation in the sacrament fosters a deeper sense of communion with God and encourages the practice of virtues such as compassion, forgiveness, and self-discipline in daily life. This implies that Religious Education and pastoral programs should continuously promote Eucharistic participation through formation activities, reflection sessions, and liturgical engagement to strengthen students' spiritual identity and guide their holistic development as faith-centered individuals. Overall, the students' narratives reflect how the Holy Eucharist becomes a lived and transformative experience, encouraging deeper participation and ongoing spiritual development.

Importance of the Holy Eucharist in Spiritual Life

The Holy Eucharist is central to the lives of Christian Catholics, serving as the powerful source of God's grace (The Catholic Company, 2024). During the interview, the researcher asked the students, "How important is the Holy Eucharist in your spiritual life?" Through a thorough thematic analysis, it becomes clear that the most common response is that the Holy Eucharist is crucial in spiritual life, serving as a source of strengthening and deepening relationships with God.

To further explain the finding presented in Table 1 that students recognize the Holy Mass as a means of fostering their spiritual growth, follow-up interviews were conducted to explore how they perceive the Holy Mass to contribute to their spiritual development. The responses consistently indicate that participants view the Holy Mass as a significant means of strengthening and deepening their relationship with God. Rather than being viewed merely as a ritual activity, it is understood as a personal and spiritual encounter that fosters a closer connection with the divine. One participant emphasized this by noting that it "helps deepen my relationship with God" (S1), highlighting its role in nurturing personal faith. Similarly, others echoed this sentiment by describing it as a way of reinforcing their spiritual bond and faith life. Collectively, the responses suggest a shared understanding that the practice serves as a vital pathway for sustaining and enriching one's spiritual connection with God (S2, S7, S11, S12, S13).

The interview results revealed that students view the Holy Eucharist as essential to deepening their life of faith, relationship, and connection with God. This understanding addresses the study's first objective by showing how spirituality is manifested through their appreciation of the sacrament. Students' reflective responses also align with the second objective, as their lived experiences during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist foster personal spiritual connections (Kolb, 1984; Dewey, 1938). The findings emphasize that the Holy Eucharist is central to the spiritual life of students, serving as a source of grace, strength, and continual renewal of faith. Regular participation fosters a deeper relationship with God and supports the development of Christian values that guide moral behavior and daily decision-making. This implies that educational and pastoral efforts should prioritize Eucharistic formation through catechesis, liturgical involvement, and spiritual enrichment programs to help students fully recognize its importance and integrate it into their lived faith experience.

Ethical Considerations

This study obtained ethical clearance from the DWCL Research Office, which serves as the institution's Research Ethics Committee, prior to its implementation. Approval was also secured from the School President and the Director of the Center for Spirituality and Mission. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with electronic consent collected before the quantitative survey and written consent secured prior to the qualitative interviews. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. To ensure confidentiality, participants' identities and responses were anonymized in all reports. All research data were stored in a password-protected file accessible only to the researcher and will be securely deleted upon publication of the study.

Conclusion

The study on Eucharistic spirituality among tertiary religious education students at Divine Word College of Legazpi (DWCL) revealed that participants demonstrated a deep understanding and appreciation of the Holy Eucharist as central to their spiritual lives. The findings indicated that students perceived the sacrament as a source of spiritual nourishment and community bonding, which they believed strengthened their faith and Catholic identity. Students described their personal and communal experiences during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist as transformative moments that deepened their spiritual awareness and connection with God. Rather than merely participating in religious rituals, participants perceived themselves as actively engaging in a faith formation process that contributed to the development of their spiritual

identity. The findings also suggested that students viewed the guidance of religious authorities and educators as important in shaping their understanding of and authentic participation in the Eucharist. Overall, the study suggests that fostering meaningful Eucharistic experiences may contribute to a spiritually vibrant academic environment where students can deepen their appreciation of the Holy Eucharist as a transformative aspect of their faith journey.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance Eucharistic spirituality among students. The DWCL Center for Spirituality and Mission – Campus Ministry Unit is encouraged to organize regular Eucharistic retreats, recollections, liturgical seminars, and faith formation activities that deepen students' understanding of the Holy Eucharist and promote meaningful participation in the Mass. Similarly, the Religious Education Unit should strengthen Eucharistic catechesis by integrating reflective learning activities, theological discussions, and practical applications into Religious Education courses, enabling students to connect Eucharistic teachings with their daily lives. Religious educators and campus ministers are likewise urged to facilitate guided reflection sessions, faith-sharing activities, and spiritual mentoring to help students internalize their Eucharistic experiences and sustain spiritual growth. Student organizations and liturgical ministries are encouraged to promote active involvement in liturgical celebrations, Eucharistic adoration, and campus-wide worship activities to foster a stronger sense of faith and community. In addition, the DWCL administration should continue to support and allocate resources for programs that strengthen Eucharistic spirituality through collaborative efforts among campus ministry, the Religious Education Department, and student organizations. Finally, future researchers are recommended to conduct longitudinal and comparative studies to further examine the development of Eucharistic spirituality across academic levels and contexts, as well as its relationship with variables such as spiritual well-being, religious commitment, moral decision-making, and community engagement.

References

- Abante, M. A. (2020). Teresians' attitude towards the Holy Eucharist. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 10(1), 47–59. <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2020.5921>
- Anike, A. M., & Duruh, L. C. (2021). Assessment of the spiritual impact of the Holy Eucharist on the lives of Roman Catholics in the South Eastern states of Nigeria. *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies*, 4(1), 233–242. <https://www.sgojahds.com/index.php/SGOJAHDS/article/view/180/186>
- Appiah-Kubi, F. (2021). The theology of the Holy Eucharist and the doctrine of transubstantiation. *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, 78–86. <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.2021761>
- Bernardo, J. (2021, June 3). Majority of Filipinos believe Holy Eucharist is "actual body and blood of Christ": Survey. *ABS-CBN News*. <https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/06/03/21/majority-of-filipinos-believe-holy-eucharist-is-actual-body-and-blood-of-christ-survey>
- Betakore, Y., Wulansari, E., & Boiliu, F. (2022). Student spirituality formation through Christian religious education. In *Proceedings of the 6th Batusangkar International Conference (BIC 2021)*. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.11-10-2021.2319606>
- Bigger, S. (n.d.). Spirituality as a process within the school curriculum. *CORE Reader*. <https://core.ac.uk/reader/50290>
- Bleiler, L. B. (2023). *Transformative learning theory as applied to worship studies* (Doctoral dissertation, Liberty University). Digital Commons. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/4198/>
- The Catholic Company. (2024, September 11). The importance of the Holy Eucharist in Catholicism. <https://www.catholiccompany.com/blogs/magazine/the-importance-of-the-holy-eucharist-in-catholicism>
- Code of Canon Law. (1983). Canon Law Society of America. <https://www.vatican.va/archive/cdc/index.htm>
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. Touchstone.
- Embalsado, J. V. M., Yabut, H. J., Miranda, J. O., Medina, A. K. S., Cruz, R. N. C., & Dumaop, D. E. (2024). Mediating role of communion, agency, and private practice on the relationship of spiritual experience and prosocial behavior of Catholic youth in the Philippines. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 45(1), 21–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2022.2153340>
- EWTN Global Catholic Television Network. (n.d.). *The Eucharist: Source and summit of Christian spirituality*. <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/eucharist-source-and-summit-of-christian-spirituality-10380>

- Garrido, Y. A., Cabahug, M. F. V., Jawhara, Y. D. H., Sandrijo, C. V. V., Garcia, R. C., & Calagui, R. M. (2024). Factors affecting students' behavior during the Eucharistic celebration. *European Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 12–17. [https://doi.org/10.59324/ejahss.2024.1\(2\).02](https://doi.org/10.59324/ejahss.2024.1(2).02)
- Jimenez, E. (2020). The Eucharist: The highest form of communal prayer. <https://diocesecc.org/news/the-eucharist-the-highest-form-of-communal-prayer>
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.
- Lareza, L. H., Jr. (2024). Importance of spirituality for religion and religious experience students: A general perspective. *International Journal for Research Trends in Social Science and Humanities*, 2(3), 155–171. <https://www.academia.edu/121046977>
- Lovasik, L. G. (2021, December 15). Holy Communion nourishes your supernatural life. *Catholic Exchange*. <https://catholicexchange.com/holy-communion-nourishes-your-supernatural-life/>
- Madrigal, D. V., Erillo, R. P., & Oracion, E. G. (2020). Religiosity and spiritual well-being of senior high school students of a Catholic college in the Philippines. *Recoletos Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 8(1), 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.32871/rmrj2008.01.06>
- Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult Education*, 28(2), 100–110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074171367802800202>
- Migut, B. (2023). Eucharistic dimension of Christian spirituality. *Questions Liturgiques/Studies in Liturgy*, 103(1), 75–89. <https://doi.org/10.2143/QL.103.1.3291655>
- Obiorah, C. (2023). The Eucharist: Sacrament of real presence and its influence on holiness of life. <https://www.academia.edu/103019695>
- Orange, M. (2024, July 26). Eucharist and belief in the true presence. *Holy Family Latrobe*. <https://www.holyfamilylatrobe.org/post/eucharist-and-belief-in-the-true-presence>
- Rahardja, D. (2021). A review of Catholic theology on Eucharistic transubstantiation and real presence doctrines—Why they matter. *SSRG International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 8(4), 70–82. <https://doi.org/10.14445/23942703/IJHSS-V8I4P111>
- Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship. (1963). *Sacrosanctum concilium: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. Vatican. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html
- Second Vatican Council. (1964). *Lumen gentium: Dogmatic constitution on the Church*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_sp.html
- Sherman, T., & Eusebio, E. (2024). Participation in the Eucharist: A conversation between God and us as between good friends. Loyola School of Theology. <https://publications.lst.edu/product/participation-in-the-eucharist/>
- Toyon, M. A. S. (2021). Explanatory sequential design of mixed methods research: Phases and challenges. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 10(5), 253–260. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v10i5.1262>
- Vide Rodríguez, V., & Wroblewski, D. (2022). Eucharistic celebration as a source of spiritual capital: Case of Spanish Catholic school. *Bogoslovska Smotra*, 92(5), 931–953. <https://doi.org/10.53745/bs.92.5.10>
- Youvan, D. (2024). Extreme faith in perilous times: The significance of the Eucharist in Christian life. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.13300.77447>
- Zhou, Y., Zhou, Y., & Machtmes, K. (2024). Mixed methods integration strategies used in education: A systematic review. *Methodological Innovations*, 17(1), 41–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20597991231217937>