

In Catholic theology, there are deep parallels between the **Bread of the Presence** (also known as the Showbread or the Bread of the Face) in the Old Testament and the Eucharist instituted by Christ at the Last Supper. These parallels highlight how the Old Covenant foreshadowed the New Covenant, and they underline the continuity between the Jewish Temple worship and the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist. Below are 10 key parallels:

## 1. Divine Presence

- **Bread of the Presence:** The bread was placed in the Tabernacle or Temple before the presence of God, signifying His abiding presence with the people of Israel (Exodus 25:30). It was called the "Bread of the Presence" because it was placed before the "face" of God.
- **Last Supper:** At the Last Supper, Christ gives the Eucharist as His real presence, saying, "This is my Body" (Matthew 26:26). In the Eucharist, Christ is truly present under the form of bread and wine.

## 2. Priestly Role

- **Bread of the Presence:** Only the Levitical priests were permitted to consume the Bread of the Presence (Leviticus 24:9). This consumption was a sacred act of priestly service.
- **Last Supper:** At the Last Supper, Christ institutes the New Covenant priesthood, instructing the apostles (who are the first priests) to "Do this in memory of me" (Luke 22:19). The Eucharist is thus administered by priests who are successors to the apostles.

## 3. Covenant Renewal

- **Bread of the Presence:** The Bread of the Presence was part of the covenantal worship, symbolizing the ongoing relationship between God and Israel. It was a reminder of the covenant at Sinai.
- **Last Supper:** The Eucharist is the sacrament of the New Covenant, which fulfills and renews the Old Covenant. Jesus declares, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20), signifying the renewal of the covenant through His sacrifice.

## 4. Twelve Loaves and Apostolic Foundation

- **Bread of the Presence:** There were twelve loaves of the Bread of the Presence, representing the twelve tribes of Israel (Leviticus 24:5-6).
- **Last Supper:** Christ institutes the Eucharist with His twelve apostles, representing the new Israel, the Church, which is founded on the twelve apostles (Revelation 21:14).

## 5. Offering and Sacrifice

- **Bread of the Presence:** The bread was considered an offering to God, laid on the golden table as a perpetual sign of Israel's devotion (Exodus 25:30). This offering was part of a larger sacrificial system.
- **Last Supper:** The Eucharist is both an offering and a sacrifice. At the Last Supper, Christ offers Himself in the form of bread and wine, anticipating His sacrificial death on the Cross. The Eucharist is a re-presentation of this one sacrifice.

## 6. Thanksgiving

- **Bread of the Presence:** The Bread of the Presence was part of a worship system that included thanksgiving offerings, acknowledging God's providence.
- **Last Supper:** The word "Eucharist" itself means "thanksgiving" in Greek. At the Last Supper, Christ gives thanks before breaking the bread (Luke 22:19), and the Eucharist continues to be the Church's supreme act of thanksgiving to God.

## 7. Sacred Space

- **Bread of the Presence:** The bread was kept in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle and later the Temple, emphasizing its sacredness.
- **Last Supper:** The Eucharist takes place within the sacred space of the Church, specifically on the altar, which is a symbol of the altar of sacrifice and a place of God's presence in the sanctuary.

## 8. Continual Presence

- **Bread of the Presence:** The bread was to be before the Lord continually (Leviticus 24:8), signifying God's ongoing presence and relationship with His people.
- **Last Supper:** The Eucharist is a continual presence of Christ in His Church. Through the perpetual celebration of the Mass, Christ remains present with His people in the Eucharist until the end of time (Matthew 28:20).

## 9. Sustenance for the Priests

- **Bread of the Presence:** The bread served as a sacred meal for the priests, sustaining them as they performed their duties (Leviticus 24:9).
- **Last Supper:** The Eucharist is the spiritual sustenance for all the faithful, especially for the priests who celebrate the Mass. Christ says, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53).

## 10. Prefiguring Christ

- **Bread of the Presence:** The Bread of the Presence was a type or foreshadowing of Christ, the true Bread from Heaven (John 6:51). The presence of the bread in the Temple pointed toward the future coming of Christ, who would dwell among His people.
- **Last Supper:** Christ is the fulfillment of the Bread of the Presence. He declares Himself to be the "living bread that came down from heaven" (John 6:51) and offers His own body and blood as the true heavenly food in the Eucharist.

## Conclusion

These parallels emphasize how the Bread of the Presence prefigured the Eucharist, showing the unity of God's plan of salvation. The Old Testament shadows are brought to fulfillment in the New Testament, particularly in the Eucharist, which Catholics believe is the "source and summit" of Christian life.

