

called Eucharist unless he believes and has been baptized, as Christ commanded.

“For we receive these not as common bread or common drink but as Jesus Christ our Savior made flesh by the Word of God possessed both flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we were taught that the food over which thanksgiving has been made by the utterance in prayer of the word derived from him is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus.”

...

After the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) evidence is too abundant to quote. ... The first heretic who formally denied the change of the bread into Christ's body was Berengarius (1047 A.D.). He asserted that to say the bread is Christ's body is a figure of speech, just as much as to say Christ is a lion or a lamb. His teaching never become popular and he retracted it in the presence of Pope Gregory VII at a council in Rome in 1079.

When Newman, Pusey, and other Oxford scholars set out to study the faith of the early Christians, they were convinced that the Church of Christ always believed in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. After the words of institution are pronounced by a legitimate minister, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine becomes his blood. This has been and is the faith of the Christian Church. God set his seal of approval by miracles on the words and deeds of many saints all of them believers in this central mystery of Catholic faith. (Excerpted from the booklet, “The Holy Eucharist”).

Forty-first International Eucharistic Congress, Philadelphia, PA (1976) Eucharistic Food

The theme of the 41st International Eucharistic Congress -- The Eucharist and the Hungers of the Human Family is as neatly refined a synopsis of the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood as one is apt to find. The Eucharist is food, and food allays hunger. The world today is hungry; the world needs the Eucharist. Christ was very conscious of man's need for food. He began his public career by fasting forty days and forty nights, “and afterward was hungry.” Just as he had nowhere to lay his head, so

on many occasions he had no food to sustain his strength: “At dawn, as Jesus was returning to the city, he was hungry.” So he could appreciate our need for nourishment, both material and spiritual. In their yearning to fill their souls with the bread of his truth, the crowds often overlooked their physical need for food. “My heart is moved with pity for the crowd. By now they have been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not wish to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way.” It was in the context of the ensuing multiplication of loaves and fishes that Jesus introduced the radically new idea of feeding us with his Body and Blood: “You should not be working for perishable food but for food that remains unto lye eternal, which the Son of Man will give you. ... I myself am the bread of life. ... The bread I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.... The man who feeds on this bread shall live forever.” Just as the everlasting life of the soul is far more important than the fleeting life of the body, so is the imperishable Bread of Life far superior to the temporal food that soon decays. Jesus knew that man's spiritual hunger is far deeper and sharper than his bodily appetite. So he instituted the Eucharist to satisfy all the hungers of the human family. Nothing but his own Body and Blood could fill the inexhaustible craving of mankind for a food that could answer all its needs. “Your ancestors ate manna In the desert, but they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven for a man to eat and never die.” On the eve of his death, when the moment arrived for the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, Christ reiterated the necessity of this divine Food for every follower of his: Take, and eat, all of you; this is my body.... All of you must drink from it, for this is my blood.” There is no freedom of choice: “Unless you eat and drink, you will not have life in you.” To all we say, in the words of the Psalmist: “Taste and see how good the Lord is.”

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Scriptural Basis for Belief in the Real Presence

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Catholics must believe in mysteries. They must give intellectual assent without doubt to the existence of Three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who own and communicate one divine nature. Moreover, of these Persons, the Son, the Second Person, became man by being born of a woman.... [This same Person, Jesus Christ, is present in the Eucharist.]

After the words of consecration, bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, so that Jesus Christ, True God and True man, with the same body he took from the Virgin Mary, in which he died on the Cross and in which he rose from the dead, is really, truly and substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine

Christ's real presence in the Holy Eucharist continues as long as the accidents (qualities) of bread and wine remain. Although by force of the words, bread is changed into the body of Christ, his body becomes present in its natural state of union with his blood and human soul. Because his human nature is always united to his divine nature, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, body and blood, soul and divinity, is really, truly and substantially present under the appearance of either bread or wine. The Word made flesh continues to dwell among us. When in the synagogue at Capharnaum Christ first revealed this truth: “Many of his disciples said: This saying is hard; and who can hear it?” If a person acknowledges the divinity of Christ, the truth worthiness of the Gospels, testimony of eyewitnesses who accompanied Christ from the time of his baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan until his ascension into heaven, he should be prepared to believe anything Christ taught. To contradict Christ is unreasonable; nothing is truer

than the word of God.

Promise of the Holy Eucharist

About a year before his death Jesus Christ fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. The miracle so impressed the multitude they wanted to make him their king. He sent his Apostles back to Capharnaum by boat; he remained behind. In the middle of the night, they were startled to see him coming to them walking on the water. These two miracles prepared them to believe a new revelation. In the sixth chapter of St. John is described what took place the next day when the multitude again made contact with Christ in Capharnaum. He began by telling them he had something more important to give than loaves and fishes. He would give heavenly food that would nourish their spiritual and supernatural life as food more salutary than the miraculous food God gave the Israelites for forty years in the desert. He said he himself is living bread come down from heaven; if they have faith in him he will nourish their souls unto life eternal. Some of his enemies challenged him, saying he did not come down from heaven. They said they knew his family. He had the same origin as other men. Christ insisted they did not know about him; he had demonstrated this by his miracles. Then (verse 52) he astounded his hearers by declaring he would feed them not only heavenly doctrine, but actually give them his flesh to eat and his blood to drink. "The Jews, therefore, disputed among themselves saying: How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus did not protest that they misunderstood him. He repeated: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.... He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me; and I in him. Many, therefore, of his disciples hearing it, said: This saying is hard and who can hear it?"

Christ's popularity reached its peak the day before when he fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes. Now his popularity sharply declined. Even disciples who had faithfully followed him, believed him and saw his miracles were thunderstruck. "Many drew back and no longer went about with him." They could not accept his incredible statement! How could he give them his flesh to eat?

It was too much. Yet Christ insisted. He turned to the Twelve and said: "Will you also go away?" Peter rose to the occasion.... "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

About a year after the discourse in the synagogue at Capharnaum Jesus fulfilled his promise by instituting the Holy Eucharist. We have four accounts of this momentous event. Matthew records that after the last supper, Christ holding bread in his hands, said: "Take you and eat, for this is my body"; and "taking the chalice, he gave thanks and gave to them saying: Drink you all of this, for this is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins." Mark gives this account: "And while they were eating Jesus took bread, and blessing, broke and gave to them and said: Take you. This is my body. And having taken the chalice, giving thanks, he gave it to them and all drank of it. And he said to them: This is the blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many." Matthew was an eyewitness; Mark was Peter's secretary who wrote what Peter preached. Luke relates: "And taking bread Jesus gave thanks and broke and gave them saying:

This is my body which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me. In like manner, the chalice also, after he had supped, saying: This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Luke was a scholar, a competent historian, who made it his practice to consult eyewitnesses with whom he was associated.

In these accounts Jesus solemnly stated while holding bread in his hands: This is my body. And when presenting the chalice: This is the chalice of my blood. His words are plain; their meaning unmistakable. They were understood literally by Apostles and disciples who "continuing deny with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house," followed his command "to do this for a commemoration of me."

About twenty-five years after the ascension of Christ, St. Paul had occasion to correct abuses that had crept into religious worship at Corinth. He heard there was disrespect for the agape or supper which preceded the consecration of the bread and wine. At the agape

"one indeed is hungry and another is drunk" (1 Cor. 11-21). This led him to restate the history of the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

"For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take you and eat: This is my body which shall be delivered for you. This do for the commemoration of me. In like manner also the chalice, after he had supped, saying: This chalice is the new testament in my blood. This do you, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of many. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until he come. Therefore, whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. For he that eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."

Christians are indebted to St. Paul for this dear statement He spoke boldly and directly on this vital subject: Let Corinthians beware. This is no common supper where it is becoming to behave like pagans. Understand me, this consecrated bread has been changed into the body of Christ; this chalice of wine has been changed into his blood. This effusion of blood shows forth the manner in which Christ died. It is most sacred. No one should be so reckless as to partake of it without examining his conscience to see if he has seriously offended God. If he is not in God's friendship, let him repent before he dare eat this bread or drink this chalice. Otherwise he may bring on himself judgment by showing irreverence to the body and blood of Christ. This letter of Paul to the Corinthians is one of the earliest written documents dealing with the faith of Christians.

Testimony of Tradition

The Rev. Joseph Pohle, Ph.D., D.D. says: "More conclusively perhaps than any other dogma of the Catholic faith can the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist be demonstrated from Tradition." St. Justin (167 A.D.) in his first Apology, explained to the emperor of Rome what went on at the Christian assembly. No one is permitted to partake of the food