

## The Real Presence

Pew Research Poll/CARA

“Someone once told the Catholic writer Flannery O’Connor that it is more open-minded to think that the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is a great, wonderful, powerful symbol.

Her response was, “If it’s only a symbol, to hell with it.”

### **I. Definition of The Real Presence.**

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops defines the Real Presence in the Eucharist as follows:

“The Lord Jesus, on the night before he suffered on the cross, shared one last meal with his disciples. During this meal our Savior instituted the sacrament of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages and to entrust to the Church his Spouse a memorial of his death and resurrection. As the Gospel of Matthew tells us:

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins." (Mt 26:26-28; cf. Mk 14:22-24, Lk 22:17-20, 1 Cor 11:23-25).

Recalling these words of Jesus, the Catholic Church professes that, in the celebration of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest. Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. . . . For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (Jn 6:51-55). The whole Christ is truly present, body, blood, soul, and divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine—the glorified Christ who rose from the dead after dying for our sins. This is what the Church means when she speaks of the "Real Presence" of Christ in the Eucharist. This presence of Christ in the Eucharist is called "real" not to exclude other types of his presence as if they could not be understood as real (cf. Catechism, no. 1374). The risen Christ is present to his Church in many ways, but most especially through the sacrament of his Body and Blood.”<sup>1</sup>

Saint Josemaria Escriva assures us that:

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<sup>1</sup> The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions and Answers. Monsignor William P. Fay, June 2021.

“What we cannot do, our Lord is able to do. Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect man, leaves us, not a symbol, but a reality. He himself stays with us. He will go to the Father, but he will also remain among men. He will leave us, not simply a gift that will make us remember him, not an image that becomes blurred with time, like a photograph that soon fades and yellows, and has no meaning except for those who were contemporaries. Under the appearances of bread and wine, he is really present, with his body and blood, with his soul and divinity.” (*Christ is Passing By*, 83)

## II. God’s Presence in Salvation History.

The Bible shows that throughout salvation history, God has been with us:

- a. Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7). So the LORD God formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the air, and he brought them to the man. (Genesis 2:19).
- b. When they heard the sound of the LORD God walking about in the garden at the breezy time of the day. (Genesis 3:8).
- c. The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oak of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. (Genesis 18:1).
- d. When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look, God called out to him from the bush: Moses! Moses! He answered, “Here I am.” God said: Do not come near! Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. (Exodus 3:4,5).
- e. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock in Horeb. Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink. (Genesis 17:6).
- f. Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel. (Genesis 7:14).
- g. Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18). She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means “God is with us.” (Matthew 1:21-23).

We learned in our study of the Trinity that God is transcendental and immanent, that is, God as transcendental is infinitely beyond us, above, beyond and outside any category of being and beyond all that He has created and great, impenetrable, and matchless. And God is immanent,

meaning that as the ground and creator of all being, space and time He is more present to us than we are to ourselves.

Can we share in these qualities of the Trinity? Can we not only have God with us through Old Testament Theophanies or in the three years of His earthly ministry, but can we share in His transcendence and immanence.

In the wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9), the plan of salvation is consummated and the proto-prophecies of Genesis are fulfilled. We are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26, 27), with the prophecy that we are to share in His being as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Genesis 2:23). But how is this to happen?

Again, in Jesus' High Priestly prayer at the Last Supper, our Lord prays that we will be one with the Trinity as they are in each other and in us: "so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me." (John 17:21-23).

We know that Jesus will return in glory at the Last Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) followed by the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7), but Jesus said, "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20). When we share in the general resurrection and our souls are restored to the glorified bodies (1 Corinthians 15:41-44), then we will be with Him, in Him and He in us and we in Christ in the Trinity. We will truly share in His image and likeness as He created and intended us from the beginning (1 Corinthians 49), partaking of His divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4).

Saint Josemaria explains in these words:

"Motivated by his own love and by his desire to teach us to love, Jesus came on earth and has stayed with us in the Eucharist. 'Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.'" (*Christ is Passing By*, 151).

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, as though all the other proofs of his mercy were insufficient, institutes the Eucharist so that he can always be close to us. We can only understand up to a point that he does so because Love moves him, who needs nothing, not to want to be separated from us. The Blessed Trinity has fallen in love with man, raised to the level of grace and made "to God's image and likeness." God has redeemed him from sin — from the sin of Adam, inherited by all his descendants, as well as from his personal sins — and desires ardently to dwell in his soul: 'If anyone love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.'" (*Christ is Passing By*, n. 84-85).

The Holy Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian" (Catechism 1324) because through our receiving this sacrament we have "communion in the divine life and that unity of the

People of God by which the Church is kept in being” (Catechism 1325), and “we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all.” (Catechism 1326). Through the Eucharist them, Jesus is with us always until the end of the age when all the faithful blessed will be united with the Holy Trinity through Christ, partaking of His divine nature forever. (John 17:21-23).

### **III. Liturgy of the Eucharist:**

#### **A. Form and Matter of the Eucharistic Celebration.**

The Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church prescribes the form and matter of the elements for the Eucharistic Celebration:

924 §1. The most holy eucharistic sacrifice must be offered with bread and with wine in which a little water must be mixed.

§2. The bread must be only wheat and recently made so that there is no danger of spoiling.

§3. The wine must be natural from the fruit of the vine and not spoiled.

925 Holy communion is to be given under the form of bread alone, or under both species according to the norm of the liturgical laws, or even under the form of wine alone in a case of necessity.

926 According to the ancient tradition of the Latin Church, the priest is to use unleavened bread in the eucharistic celebration whenever he offers it.

927 It is absolutely forbidden, even in extreme urgent necessity, to consecrate one matter without the other or even both outside the eucharistic celebration.

928 The eucharistic celebration is to be carried out in the Latin language or in another language provided that the liturgical texts have been legitimately approved. [**Motu proprio, “by his own impulse”**].

929 In celebrating and administering the Eucharist, priests and deacons are to wear the sacred vestments prescribed by the rubrics.

#### **B. Words of Consecration.**

i. "Consecration" at Mass refers to the central moment when the bread and wine, by the words of Christ spoken by the priest and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become the Body and Blood of Christ. The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1377).

88. Holding his hands extended over the offerings, he says:

Be pleased, O God, we pray, to bless, acknowledge, and approve this offering in every respect; make it spiritual and acceptable, so that it may become for us the Body and Blood of your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

He joins his hands.

89. In the formulas that follow, the words of the Lord should be pronounced clearly and distinctly, as the nature of these words requires.

On the day before he was to suffer,

He takes the bread and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues:

he took bread in his holy and venerable hands,

He raises his eyes.

and with eyes raised to heaven to you, O God, his almighty Father, giving you thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying:

He bows slightly.

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT, FOR THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.

He shows the consecrated host to the people, places it again on the paten, and genuflects in adoration.

90. After this, the Priest continues:

In a similar way, when supper was ended,

He takes the chalice and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues:

he took this precious chalice in his holy and venerable hands, and once more giving you thanks, he said the blessing and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying:

He bows slightly.

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT, FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD, THE BLOOD OF THE NEW

AND ETERNAL COVENANT, WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.

He shows the chalice to the people, places it on the corporal, and genuflects in adoration.

91. Then he says:

The mystery of faith.

And the people continue, acclaiming:

We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

Or:

When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Or:

Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

### C. If the Priest Makes a Mistake in the Words Used:

Generally, if the priest fails to say the essential words of consecration, the Mass is invalid, and the Eucharist is not consecrated. However, what if he gets confused and mixes up part of the old translation with the new?

In the Papal Bull of St. Pius V, *De defectibus*, it is specified that, “if the priest were to shorten or change the form of the consecration of the Body and the Blood, so that in the change of wording the words did not mean the same thing, he would not be achieving a valid Sacrament. If, on the other hand, he were to add or take away anything which did not change the meaning, the Sacrament would be valid, but he would be committing a grave sin.”

If (presumably by some accident) the priest were to confuse the words of consecration, the first question to ask is: Did the essential meaning (which is transubstantiation and sacrifice) remain? If the words still communicate this meaning, then the Mass is valid. If not, then the Mass is invalid.

Let’s look at an example: “For this is the cup of my Blood, etc.” Now, the word “cup” is out of place, since the new translation says “chalice”; however, the validity of the Mass is certainly not in question, since the essential meaning remains.

Another example: The priest says, “For this is the chalice of my Blood” and then skips ahead to “Do this in memory of me”, without saying anything of the middle (about the Blood being “poured out” or, previously, “shed”). This would make the Mass invalid, since part of the essential meaning (namely, the sacrifice) is left out. In this case, the Host would be validly consecrated, but the wine would remain merely wine.

Although there may be some mistakes on the part of the priest during the pronouncement of the words of consecration – for example, if a priest uses contractions as in “It’ll be shed” rather than “It will be shed”, over the chalice (in the old translation) – then these errors do not have any negative impact on the validity of the Mass. The Eucharist is still consecrated, so long as the essential meaning of the words remains.

Still, the priest is not excused of **grave fault** (as Pius V says), if he makes these errors purposefully or out of gross carelessness.

Why is precision and faithful adherence to the words of Christ so important? Saint Josemaria warns: “The Mass is, I insist, an action of God, of the Trinity. It is not a merely human event. The priest who celebrates fulfills the desire of our Lord, lending his body and his voice to the divine action. He acts, not in his own name, but *in persona et in nomine Christi*: in the Person of Christ and in his name. (*Christ is Passing By*, 86)

#### **IV. Biblical Passages on the Eucharist, Last Supper and Real Presence.**

##### **A. Old Testament, Foreshadowing of the Eucharistic Sacrifice:**

Gen. 14:18 – this is the first time that the word “priest” is used in Old Testament. Melchizedek is both a priest and a king and he offers a bread and wine sacrifice to God.

Psalm 76:2 – Melchizedek is the king of Salem. Salem is the future Jeru-salem where Jesus, the eternal priest and king, established his new Kingdom and the Eucharistic sacrifice which He offered under the appearance of bread and wine.

Psalm 110:4 – this is the prophecy that Jesus will be the eternal priest and king in the same manner as this mysterious priest Melchizedek. This prophecy requires us to look for an eternal bread and wine sacrifice in the future. This prophecy is fulfilled only by the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Catholic Church.

Malachi 1:11 – this is a prophecy of a pure offering that will be offered in every place from the rising of the sun to its setting. Thus, there will be only one sacrifice, but it will be offered in many places around the world. This prophecy is fulfilled only by the Catholic Church in the Masses around the world, where the sacrifice of Christ which transcends time and space is offered for our salvation. If this prophecy is not fulfilled by the Catholic Church, then Malachi is a false prophet.

Exodus 12:14,17,24; cf. 24:8 – we see that the feast of the paschal lamb is a perpetual ordinance. It lasts forever. But it had not yet been fulfilled.

Exodus 29:38-39 – God commands the Israelites to “offer” (poieseis) the lambs upon the altar. The word “offer” is the same verb Jesus would use to institute the Eucharistic offering of Himself.

Lev. 19:22 – the priests of the old covenant would make atonement for sins with the guilt offering of an animal which had to be consumed. Jesus, the High Priest of the New Covenant, has atoned for our sins by His one sacrifice, and He also must be consumed.

Jer. 33:18 – God promises that His earthly kingdom will consist of a sacrificial priesthood forever. This promise has been fulfilled by the priests of the Catholic Church, who sacramentally offer the sacrifice of Christ from the rising of the sun to its setting in every Mass around the world.

Zech. 9:15-16 – this is a prophecy that the sons of Zion, which is the site of the establishment of the Eucharistic sacrifice, shall drink blood like wine and be saved. This prophecy is fulfilled only by the priests of the Catholic Church.

2 Chron. 26:18 – only validly consecrated priests will be able to offer the sacrifice to God. The Catholic priests of the New Covenant trace their sacrificial priesthood to Christ.

(b). Foreshadowing of the Requirement to Consume the Sacrifice

Gen. 22:9-13 – God saved Abraham’s first-born son on Mount Moriah with a substitute sacrifice which had to be consumed. This foreshadowed the real sacrifice of Israel’s true first-born son (Jesus) who must be consumed.

Exodus 12:5 – the paschal lamb that was sacrificed and eaten had to be without blemish. Luke 23:4,14; John 18:38 – Jesus is the true paschal Lamb without blemish.

Exodus 12:7,22-23 – the blood of the lamb had to be sprinkled on the two door posts. This paschal sacrifice foreshadows the true Lamb of sacrifice and the two posts of His cross on which His blood was sprinkled.

Exodus 12:8,11 – the paschal lamb had to be eaten by the faithful in order for God to “pass over” the house and spare their first-born sons. Jesus, the true paschal Lamb, must also be eaten by the faithful in order for God to forgive their sins.

Exodus 12:43-45; Ezek. 44:9 – no one outside the “family of God” shall eat the lamb. Non-Catholics should not partake of the Eucharist until they are in full communion with the Church.

Exodus 12:49 – no uncircumcised person shall eat of the lamb. Baptism is the new circumcision for Catholics, and thus one must be baptized in order to partake of the Lamb.



Exodus 12:47; Num. 9:12 – the paschal lamb’s bones could not be broken. John 19:33 – none of Jesus’ bones were broken.

Exodus 16:4-36; Neh 9:15 – God gave His people bread from heaven to sustain them on their journey to the promised land. This foreshadows the true bread from heaven which God gives to us at Mass to sustain us on our journey to heaven.

There are many more Old Testament references:  
<https://www.scripturecatholic.com/the-eucharist/>.

## **B. New Testament Scriptural Passages:**

John 6:33-69: For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” So they said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst. But I told you that although you have seen [me], you do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it [on] the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him [on] the last day.” The Jews murmured about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven,” and they said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” Jesus answered and said to them, “Stop murmuring among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: ‘They shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?” Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever.” These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. Then many of his disciples who were listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” Since Jesus knew that his disciples

were murmuring about this, he said to them, “Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father.” As a result of this, many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?” Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

There is no question but that Jesus was not speaking metaphorically or through the use of similes in this passage. First, after the Jews started murmuring and arguing among themselves, Jesus reiterates His message and says, “In all truth I tell you,” or “verily, verily” as some translations provide. These are not the words of someone speaking metaphorically. These are words our Savior wanted us to accept as literal truth. Second, when some of his followers began to walk away saying to each other, “this is a hard saying; who can hear it,” [John 6:60], Jesus did not say: “Come back; I’m sorry if you misunderstood; I was just using a simile to make a point.” In fact, it appeared to Jesus that even his own chosen Twelve Apostles might walk away in response to his teachings about the Eucharist for in John’s Gospel then says: “Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?” [John 6:67] Jesus was willing to permit his chosen Twelve to leave Him rather than withdraw or explain away His words of promise and life.

Third, an examination of the original Greek in which John’s Gospel was written will dispel any notion that Jesus was speaking through the use of a simile. In the first passages in which Jesus says, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever,” the Greek word that the Gospel writer uses for “eat” is *esthio*, meaning to eat or partake. In the passage from John’s Gospel after the murmuring and argument of the Jews and His followers is heard, where Jesus says, “As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that shall eat of me even so he shall live by me,” the Greek word John uses for “eat” is *trogo* which means to gnaw, chew or crunch. Jesus wants us to make no mistake. He is very serious about this sacrament and demands that we take it seriously. He stands at the door of each person and knocks. He would come in and dwell with us and invite us to dwell in Him.

Is it so hard to believe that our Savior standing as a Lamb slain for us and ever alive at the right hand of God the Father would come to us in the elements of bread and wine, derived from His very own Creation and the work of human hands? Are we to say that what the Lord promised is impossible? In His memorial instructions at the Last Supper, Jesus said, “This is my body; this is my blood. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Some may say, how can Jesus be in Heaven at the right hand of the Father and also be present on this altar? All four Gospels share with us the miracle of the loaves. In Mark’s Gospel, we learn something that answers this question. After feeding the five thousand, Jesus sends his apostles in a boat across the sea while He went into the hills to pray and was alone on the land. [Mark 6:46,47]. As the apostles encounter stiff winds and a rough sea, they see Jesus coming to them walking on the sea, thinking Him a ghost. Mark then tells us something astonishing that we might miss if not careful: “Then he got into the boat with them and the wind dropped. They were utterly and completely dumbfounded, because they had not seen what the miracle of the loaves meant; their minds were closed.” [Mark 6:51,52]. The miracle of the loaves was meant to teach us many things including the fact that just as the loaves could be multiplied or multilocated to feed the five thousand, Jesus could be alone on land in the hills praying, but also coming across the water and in the boat with His apostles. Jesus is forever at the right hand of the Father, and His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity are also on the altar upon the priest speaking the words of consecration in *personi Christi*.

Some may also say, how can the bread and wine be transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ? We believe that from the Word He spoke the stars, matter and the light of creation exploded into being from nothing. [Rev. 1:16]; we believe that His little infant fingers that held Mary’s palm now hold all of us in being and in Him. We believe He was the Son of God and without sin, but in an act of incredible, infinite love gave Himself through the brutal violence of the Cross for our sins. Until that Easter morning, death always had the last word and there was no power in all of the created Universe to stay death’s hand, but we believe in the Resurrection. Although scientists assure us that the universe is decaying, governed by the entropic laws of nature, we believe that Jesus is making all things new and the New Earth, New Heaven and New Jerusalem are even now on their way to us.

1 Corinthians 10:16: The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

1 Corinthian 11:23-27: The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

## V. **Patristic Writings.**

Many Protestants claim that the Real Presence based on the doctrine of transubstantiation is merely a medieval invention by the Catholic Church. In fact, the faith and belief in the Real Presence was held by Christians from the very earliest time in Church history.

Although medieval theologians may have been the ones to provide a thoughtful, articulated philosophical basis for what was termed “transubstantiation,” this teaching was present from the very beginning of the church. Saint Ignatius became the third bishop of Antioch succeeding St. Evodius, who was the immediate successor of St. Peter. He heard St. John preach when he was a boy and knew St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. Seven of his letters written to various Christian communities have been preserved. Eventually, he received the martyr's crown as he was thrown to wild beasts in the arena. Consider these excerpts from his letters of the first century:

“Consider how contrary to the mind of God are the heterodox in regard to the grace of God which has come to us. They have no regard for charity, none for the widow, the orphan, the oppressed, none for the man in prison, the hungry or the thirsty. They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not admit that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, the flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in His graciousness, raised from the dead.”

Letter to the Smyrnaeans, paragraph 6. circa 80-110 A.D.

"Come together in common, one and all without exception in charity, in one faith and in one Jesus Christ, who is of the race of David according to the flesh, the son of man, and the Son of God, so that with undivided mind you may obey the bishop and the priests, and break one Bread which is the medicine of immortality and the antidote against death, enabling us to live forever in Jesus Christ."

Letter to the Ephesians, paragraph 20, c. 80-110 A.D.

"I have no taste for the food that perishes nor for the pleasures of this life. I want the Bread of God which is the Flesh of Christ, who was the seed of David; and for drink I desire His Blood which is love that cannot be destroyed."

Letter to the Romans, paragraph 7, circa 80-110 A.D.

Saint Justin Martyr was born a pagan but converted to Christianity after studying philosophy. He was a prolific writer and many Church scholars consider him the greatest apologist or defender of the faith from the 2nd century. He was beheaded with six of his companions sometime between 163 and 167 A.D. Consider these writings from the second century:

"This food we call the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true and has received the washing for forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives as Christ handed down to us. For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Savior being incarnate by God's Word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the Word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation, is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus."

First Apology, Ch. 66, inter A.D. 148-155.

"God has therefore announced in advance that all the sacrifices offered in His name, which Jesus Christ offered, that is, in the Eucharist of the Bread and of the Chalice, which are offered by us Christians in every part of the world, are pleasing to Him."

Dialogue with Trypho, Ch. 117, circa 130-160 A.D.

"Moreover, as I said before, concerning the sacrifices which you at that time offered, God speaks through Malachias, one of the twelve, as follows: 'I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord; and I will not accept your sacrifices from your hands; for from the rising of the sun until its setting, my name has been glorified among the gentiles; and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a clean offering: for great is my name among the gentiles, says the Lord; but you profane it.' It is of the sacrifices offered to Him in every place by us, the gentiles, that is, of the Bread of the Eucharist and likewise of the cup of the Eucharist, that He speaks at that time; and He says that we glorify His name, while you profane it."

Dialogue with Trypho, [41: 8-10]

Finally, we consider the teachings of Saint Augustine, recognized by all Christian denominations, as one of the most important figures in the development of Western Christianity. Saint Augustine was not only the author of the City of God, a spiritual work of timeless value, but he is also recognized by Roman Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans, Calvinists and Lutherans as a theological father and doctor of the church for his teachings on salvation and divine grace. Here is what Saint Augustine said about the elements of bread and wine being consecrated and becoming for us the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ:

"You ought to know what you have received, what you are going to receive, and what you ought to receive daily. That Bread which you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Body of Christ. The chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Blood of Christ."

Sermons, [227, 21]

"He who made you men, for your sakes was Himself made man; to ensure your adoption as many sons into an everlasting inheritance, the blood of the Only-Begotten has been shed for you. If in your own reckoning you have held yourselves cheap because of your earthly frailty, now assess yourselves by the price paid for you; meditate, as you should, upon what you eat, what you drink, to what you answer 'Amen'".

Second Discourse on Psalm 32. Ch. 4.

"For the whole Church observes this practice which was handed down by the Fathers: that it prays for those who have died in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, when they are commemorated in their own place in the sacrifice itself; and the sacrifice is offered also in memory of them on their behalf."

Sermons, 172,2, circa 400 A.D.

"The fact that our fathers of old offered sacrifices with beasts for victims, which the present-day people of God read about but do not do, is to be understood in no way but this: that those things signified the things that we do in order to draw near to God and to recommend to our neighbor the same purpose. A visible sacrifice, therefore, is the sacrament, that is to say, the sacred sign, of an invisible sacrifice... . Christ is both the Priest, offering Himself, and Himself the Victim. He willed that the sacramental sign of this should be the daily sacrifice of the Church, who, since the Church is His body and He the Head, learns to offer herself through Him."

The City of God, 10, 5; 10,20, c. 426.

In conclusion, it is clear that from the earliest days of the Christian Church, its teachers, saints and martyrs accepted the communion meal in which the elements of bread and wine are consecrated as the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ

Martin Luther himself disparaged the idea that celebration of the last Supper is merely "symbolic." "[S]ince we are confronted by God's words, "This is my body" – distinct, clear, common, definite words, which certainly are no trope, either in Scripture or in any language – we must embrace them with faith . . . not as hairsplitting sophistry dictates but as God says them for us, we must repeat these words after him and hold to them." (*Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, 1528; in Althaus, 390)

In fact, Martin Luther preached on John 6 and said the following:

"All right! There we have it! This is clear, plain, and unconcealed:  
"I am speaking of My flesh and blood."

. . . There we have the flat statement which cannot be interpreted in any other way than that there is no life, but death alone, apart from His flesh and blood if these are neglected or despised. How is it possible to distort this text? . . . You must note these words and this text with the utmost diligence . . . It can neither speciously be interpreted nor avoided and evaded.” (Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 6-8, 1532; LW, 23, 133-135)

The journey of this Presbyterian minister toward acceptance of the Real Presence is also illuminating:

Jesus once said, “Unless you eat my body and drink my blood, there is no life in you” but did He mean His words to be taken symbolically or literally? This text comes from the Gospel of John, 6:53, a text I never preached on as a Presbyterian minister. In fact, I pretty much avoided John 6 during my fifteen-plus years in Protestant ministry because I was uncomfortable with this very question: symbolic or literal. This chapter in John remained safely untouched up on the nice shelf.

When I was a Presbyterian minister, I assumed that Jesus could only here have been speaking in images not literally. Yet, nowhere else in Scripture does Jesus use spirit to mean symbol. When he said, “God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24), did He mean that God is only a symbol? When He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5), was He only speaking figuratively? Hardly, but what is most revealing is that even His closest friends did not understand Him as speaking figuratively, for we read in verse 66 that “[a]fter this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him.”

The winnowing process had separated the wheat from the chaff, leaving only the Twelve, to whom Jesus asked, “Do you also wish to go away?” (John 6:67). The winnowing process was not yet complete, however, for after possibly a moment of silence, only one of those remaining spoke up. “Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God’” (John 6:68-69).

This is how, by grace, I became open to the Catholic Church’s teaching on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The way I’ve related this, it may sound like this took place in one sitting, but it really took many months and involved many other influences, resources, and the witness of many Catholics and converts. But in

the end, it was Peter's answer that essentially became my answer:  
Where else could I go to find truth?

## **VI. Transubstantiation.**

The doctrine of transubstantiation holds that through the person of the properly ordained priest speaking the proper words of consecration, God changes the bread and wine on the altar into His actual body and blood, soul and divinity. "Trans" means across or change and "substance" means the essence of what something is. The real presence is the belief that Jesus Christ is wholly and truly present in the Eucharist. Transubstantiation, then, is explanation that is given as to how this miracle is possible and more readily comprehensible by the human mind.

According to Aquinas, after the words of consecration are said by the priest, the bread and wine are changed substantially into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. That is to say, the essence or substance of the bread and wine become Christ, while the accidental properties remain the same. Accidental properties are those features of thing that are nonessential: its texture, smell, taste, would all be nonessential characteristics to bread and wine. Jesus Christ becomes wholly and truly present in the Eucharistic gifts, but the accidental properties remain the same; the dimensions of Christ's body do not become present.

The doctrines of transubstantiation and real presence are two distinct issues. The belief in real presence is the indubitable and miraculous article of faith that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist. Transubstantiation, on the other hand, is the metaphysical explanation that has been cycled through and developed by the Church to explain how it is intelligible for Jesus Christ to be truly and wholly present in the bread and wine.

The Thirteenth session of the Council of Trent in 1547 definitively held:

Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly His body that He was offering under the species of bread and wine, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now again declares that, by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the body of His blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly named transubstantiation

The basic objection to the Catholic doctrine of the real presence is not that it is against Scripture, but that it is against reason. The words of Jesus seem plain enough. "This is my body." "This is my blood." "Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you do not have life in you." "My flesh is real food, my blood is real drink." When some of his disciples complained, "This is a hard saying; who can accept it?", he didn't explain that he had not been speaking literally in saying he would give his body to eat and his blood to drink. Instead, he let them go. As St. John tells us, many left him because they would not accept this teaching.

Our Lord's words are not interpreted non-literally because that is the obvious way to interpret them, but because a literal interpretation seems to be repugnant to reason. The



conservative Protestant theologian Louis Berkhof, in his work *Systematic Theology*, insists that the Roman teaching "... violates the human senses, where it asks us to believe that what tastes and looks like bread and wine, is really flesh and blood: and human reason, where it requires belief in the separation of a substance and its properties and in the presence of a material body in several places at the same time, both of which are contrary to reason."

The first Christian leader of any historical importance to deny the Real Presence in the Eucharist was Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531), the Swiss Protestant leader. Zwingli wrote:

And how can we say that it is flesh when we do not perceive it to be such? If the body were there miraculously, the bread would not be bread, but we should perceive it to be flesh. Since, however, we see and perceive bread, it is evident that we are ascribing to God a miracle which he himself neither wills nor approves: for he does not work miracles which cannot be perceived. (*On the Lord's Supper*, 1526, translated by G. W. Bromiley)

Even among Catholics firmly committed to all that the Church teaches, one finds much confusion and various misunderstandings regarding Christ's Eucharistic presence. Pew Research Poll; CARA.

Jesus looked, felt, and sounded like a man; no one but those possessing faith would know (from simply observing Him) that He was also God, an uncreated Person who had made everything upon which He stood. No blood test could reveal that. In fact, remember what they said in John 6:42 – "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" By all outward appearance, Jesus was simply a man like any other man and not a person who is true God and true man.

## **VII. Eucharistic Miracles.**

There have been many Eucharistic miracles over the centuries since the Resurrection of our Lord. One of the most recent and well-documented through independent forensic testing and examination was in 1996. Here is a report from the office of the Bishop of Fargo, North Dakota:

"At seven o'clock in the evening on Aug. 18, 1996, Father Alejandro Pezet was celebrating Holy Mass at a Catholic church in the commercial center of Buenos Aires. As he was finishing distributing Holy Communion, a woman came up to tell him that she had found a discarded host on a candleholder at the back of the church. Going to the spot indicated, Father Alejandro saw the defiled Host. Since he was unable to consume it, he placed it in a container of water and put it away in the tabernacle of the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament.

On Aug. 26, upon opening the tabernacle, he saw to his amazement that the Host had turned into a bloody substance. He informed Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio (now Pope Francis), who gave instructions that the Host be professionally photographed. The photos were taken on Sept. 6. They clearly show that the Host, which had become a fragment of bloodied flesh, had grown significantly in size. For several

years, the Host remained in the tabernacle, the whole affair being kept a strict secret. Since the Host suffered no visible decomposition, Cardinal Bergoglio decided to have it scientifically analyzed.

On Oct. 5, 1999, in the presence of the Cardinal's representatives, Dr. Castanon took a sample of the bloody fragment and sent it to New York for analysis. Since he did not wish to prejudice the study, he purposely did not inform the team of scientists of its provenance. One of these scientists was Dr. Frederic Zugiba, a well-known cardiologist and forensic pathologist. He determined that the analyzed substance was real flesh and blood containing human DNA.

Dr. Zugiba testified that, "the analyzed material is a fragment of the heart muscle found in the wall of the left ventricle close to the valves...The heart muscle is in an inflammatory condition and contains a large number of white blood cells. This indicates that the heart was alive at the time the sample was taken, since white blood cells die outside a living organism. They require a living organism to sustain them.<sup>2</sup> Thus, their presence indicates that the heart was alive when the sample was taken. What is more, these white blood cells had penetrated the tissue, which further indicates that the heart had been under severe stress, as if the owner had been beaten severely about the chest."

Two Australians, journalist Mike Willesee and lawyer Ron Tesoriero, witnessed these tests. Knowing where the sample had come from, they were dumbfounded by Dr. Zugiba's testimony. Mike Willesee asked the scientist how long the white blood cells would have remained alive if they had come from a piece of human tissue, which had been kept in water. They would have ceased to exist in a matter of minutes, Dr. Zugiba replied. The journalist then told the doctor that the source of the sample had first been kept in ordinary water for a month and then for another three years in a container of distilled water; only then had the sample been taken for analysis.

Dr. Zugiba was at a loss to account for this fact. There was no way of explaining it scientifically, he stated. Only then did Mike Willesee inform Dr. Zugiba that the analyzed sample came from a consecrated Host (white, unleavened bread) that had mysteriously turned into bloody human flesh. Amazed by this information, Dr. Zugiba replied, "How and why a consecrated Host would change its character and become living human flesh and blood will remain an inexplicable mystery to science—a mystery totally beyond her competence."

### **VIII. Anamnesis.**

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<sup>2</sup> This doctor was at first greatly distressed because he believed the sample must have been taken from a living person - - that is, the person from whom the sample was taken must have been just immediately killed to accomplish this. Remember, this is all talking place years after the Host was presented to the parish priest.

The words of consecration not only affect a profound, substantial and real change in the essence of the bread and wine so that they become the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, but they also affect a change in time and space.

Fr. Robert Spitzer, SJ—founder of the Magis Center and featured on EWTN’s Fr. Spitzer’s Universe—discusses the 1st-century Jewish view of time and memory in his article, “The Real Presence of Jesus.” There he reminds us that this view of time and memory is critical to an understanding of what Jesus intended when He celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples:

In this view, time is not an unalterable physical property (as in the “space-time continuum” of the Theory of Relativity). Rather, time was seen as a surmountable and controllable dimension of sacred history.

Religious authorities believed that the celebration of the Passover Supper was a return to the sacred events of the Exodus, and that reliving this sacred moment would bring them close to the sacred reality (God), which would, in turn, sacralize them—make them holy.

Fr. Spitzer then explains how Christ’s words made present His future sacrifice on Calvary:

When He handed the bread to His apostles at table using the words, “Take, this is my body,” and then after the Supper handed them the cup of wine with these words, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for the many,” He intended to collapse the time between the Supper and His death on the cross at Calvary (in the future) through His prophetic utterance.

Fr. Spitzer points to a similar collapse of time at every Eucharistic celebration since that first one:

The priest collapses the time from his present moment to the time of Jesus’ Last Supper, bringing the bread and wine that Jesus gives His apostles into the present moment—(just as) Jesus collapsed the time between His Eucharistic Last Supper and His future Body and Blood on the Cross at the very moment of His words of institution.

Essentially, by using the phrase, “Do this in remembrance of me,” Jesus established His Last Supper as a ritual and a way for Him to be present to His followers at any time throughout all of history. Fr. Spitzer makes an additional point. When the Greek word *anamnesis* is used for “remembrance,” it is not merely “a calling to mind.” He quotes Johannes Betz from *The Eucharist in the Didache*:

Anamnesis in the biblical sense means . . . the objective effectiveness and presence of one reality in another, especially the effectiveness and presence of the salvific actions of God, in the liturgical worship. Even in the Old Testament, the liturgy is the privileged medium in which the covenant attains actuality.

Each year beginning in 1926, the famous English convert Msgr. Ronald Knox gave a homily on Corpus Christi Sunday at Corpus Christi Church (also called “the actor’s church”) in the heart of London. In one of his homilies, “First and Last Communion,” he asks the reader to imagine the last Mass that will be offered on earth:

Yesterday, today, and forever—cast your mind forward to the last Mass that will ever be said on earth. . . . Yes it will be the same in all essentials. . . . The language in which the vernacular prayers are said will be a language, perhaps, which the human race has not yet invented. The architecture of the church may be of a kind we can imagine as little as the holy apostles, say, could have imagined Westminster Abbey. The feast celebrated on that occasion may be the feast of some saint who will not be born for many years yet . . . **in the consecration of that last Mass the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ will be no more and no less present, no more and no less powerful in its effects, than in the Mass you are hearing just now, or in that first Mass of the first Maundy Thursday.**

### **VIII. Did the Early Christians Die for a Symbol or the Real Person of Christ?**

Through the Eucharist, the sacramental consecration of the elements of bread and wine, parts of His Creation, Jesus enters into us as the Lamb of God crucified on the Cross to take away our sins as well as the Resurrected Lord who raises us up to everlasting life. In His wholeness our broken body and spirit are healed and in Him we have everlasting life. We are one Body, one Spirit, and we have one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one hope in one God and Father of all, over all, through all and within all. [Ephesians 4:4-6].

In the year 304 A.D., the Roman Emperor Diocletian forbade Christians on pain of death from gathering on Sundays to celebrate the Eucharist. In Abitene, a small village on the coast of present-day Tunisia in North Africa, Christians were surprised by a phalanx of centurions who broke into their church home, arrested them and took them to be interrogated by the Proconsul Anulinus in Carthage. He demanded to know why they had gathered together to receive the Eucharist knowing of the Emperor’s death penalty edict. One of their members, Emeritus, replied: “Sine dominico non possumus.” Translated this means: “without Sunday we cannot live.”

### **X. Valid Ordination.**

- A. Apostolicae Curae
- B. Edwardine Ordinal.

### **X. The Veil Removed.**