



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

In the Eucharist, the Christ who offered himself on the cross is the same Christ who now, through the ministry of the priest, offers himself on the altar. Under the Eucharistic species (the exterior signs of bread and wine), He comes in the way that is most satisfying - as a human person. He is present in a unique way - whole and entire, God and man. This presence is also called Real Presence, not because the other ways of being present are not real, but because this way of being present surpasses all the others. It is the personal presence of Christ's glorified body. He makes himself truly present in a sacramental way in the Eucharist through the instrumentality of his Church.

When Jesus comes to us in Communion, he knows and loves each of us personally. As the food of divine life, he deepens his eternal life in us, transforming the human things and actions become his proclamation of the Good News. Our service of others is both his service to them and our service to him, for "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). Through the Eucharist, the world is daily recharged with the current of Christ's love until the final day when God's love will be the light and warmth of both heaven and earth.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

How the change in the bread and wine by the words of consecration takes place is a mystery. No explanation can clar-

ify it completely, but, from the beginning of the Church, theologians have labored to find words that attempt to explain what Jesus did that night of the Last Supper.

While bread is a basic, ordinary food, it contains many meanings. It is the symbol of all God's gifts of creation and also all "the work of human hands." The crushing of the many grains to make flour is an image of human interdependence.

Jesus did not merely strengthen these meanings. He gave the bread an entirely new meaning. Jesus broke the bread to share it, to show that all present were one in spirit. Jesus with his disciples, and they with one another. He changed the bread completely from a gift - a thing given - to the very giver himself. Although the appearances of the bread remain in the Eucharist, the reality of bread is changed into the personal, actual, and real presence of Christ himself.

To describe this change of bread into the body of Christ, official Church teachings use the technical word transubstantiation. It means the change of the substance of bread into the body of Christ. The bread and wine are not annihilated or wiped out of existence, instead, they are transformed. All their physiochemical properties - color, taste, bulk, minerals, carbohydrates - remain. It is faith alone that tells us that what we eat and drink is the risen Lord Jesus.

Because of developments in physics and philosophy in the last two hundred years, the word substance has undergone a shift in meaning. As a result, Catholic theologians of this century have been prompt to search for more suitable words to reinterpret the doctrine of the Real Presence.

Thus far, however, no word is so helpful as transubstantiation, first used by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, to describe the "how" of the Eucharist. Although the term is not in the Bible and was never used before A.D. 1150, it has served for centuries to express what happens at the words of consecration. As Christians, we have the obligation to be careful of the words we use to express this mystery. The great truth that we must always remember is that in giving the Eucharist, Christ gave not merely a proof or symbol of his love, but his very self to be the sacramental food.

Excerpt from "Worship and Sacraments - We Celebrate, We Praise" by Mary Kathleen Glavich, SND and Loretta

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Things to talk about:

- Do you have a need for the Eucharist?
- How does partaking in Christ's body and blood transform me?
- In what ways are you flesh for the life of the world?
- What thoughts do you have as you approach the communion table?

A Preface of the Eucharist Prayer

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God,
we do well always and everywhere
to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord.

At the last supper
as he sat at table with his apostles,
he offered himself to you as the spotless lamb,
the acceptable gift that gives you perfect praise.
Christ has given us this memorial of his passion
to bring us its saving power until the end of time.

In this great sacrament you feed your people
and strengthen them in holiness,
so that the family of mankind
may come to walk in the light of one faith,
in one communion of love.

We come then to this wonderful sacrament
to be fed at your table
and grow into the likeness of the risen Christ.

Earth unites with heaven
to sing the song of creation
as we adore and praise you for ever...



Sermon from St. Augustine

My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

You see on God’s altar bread and a cup. That is what the evidence of your eyes tells you, but your faith requires you to believe that the bread is the body of Christ, the cup the blood of Christ. In these few words we can say perhaps all that faith demands.

Faith, however, seeks understanding; so you may now say to me: “You have told us what we have to believe, but explain it so that we can understand it, because it is quite possible for someone to think along these lines: We know from whom our Lord Jesus Christ took his flesh—it was from the Virgin Mary.

As a baby, he was suckled, he was fed, he developed, he came to young man’s estate. He was slain on the cross, he was taken down from it, he was buried, he rose again on the third day. On the day of his own choosing, he ascended to heaven, taking his body with him; and it is from heaven that he will come to judge the living and the dead.

But now that he is there, seated at the right hand of the Father, how can bread be his body? And the cup, or rather what is in the

cup, how can that be his blood?”

These things, my friends, are called sacraments, because our eyes see in them one thing, our understanding another. Our eyes see the material form; our understanding, its spiritual effect.

If, then, you want to know what the body of Christ is, you must listen to what the Apostle tells the faithful: Now you are the body of Christ, and individually you are members of it.

If that is so, it is the sacrament of yourselves that is placed on the Lord’s altar, and it is the sacrament of yourselves that you receive.

You reply “Amen” to what you are, and thereby agree that such you are. You hear the words “The body of Christ” and you reply “Amen.” Be, then, a member of Christ’s body, so that your “Amen” may accord with the truth.

Yes, but why all this in bread? Here let us not advance any ideas of our own, but listen to what the Apostle says over and over again when speaking of this sacrament: Because there is one loaf, we, though we are many, form one body.

Let your mind assimilate that and be glad, for there you will find unity, truth, piety, and love. He says, one loaf. And who is this one loaf? We, though we are many, form one body.

Now bear in mind that bread is not made of a single grain, but of many. Be, then, what you see, and receive what you are.

So much for what the Apostle says about the bread. As for the cup, what we have to believe is quite clear, although the Apostle does not mention it expressly.

Just as the unity of the faithful, which holy Scripture describes in the words: They were of one mind and heart in God, should be like the kneading together of many grains into one visible loaf, so with the wine.

Think how wine is made. Many grapes hang in a cluster, but their juice flows together into an indivisible liquid.

It was thus that Christ our Lord signified us, and his will that we should belong to him, when he hallowed the sacrament of our peace and unity on his altar.

Anyone, however, who receives this sacrament of unity and does not keep the bond of peace, does not receive it to his profit, but as a testimony against himself.

(Sermon 272: PL 38, 1246-1248)

Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

- The Real Presence in the Eucharist is “presence” in the fullest sense, a substantial presence (CCC 1374)
- In the Eucharistic sacrifice the bread and wine become Christ’s body and blood (CCC 1350).
- The Eucharist is the center of Catholic life (LG 11; PO 5; CCC 1211, 1324). It makes us into the people of God (LG 9).
- The Eucharist is the source for and the highest expression of the ministry we share with Christ (LG 28; PO 2; CCC 1566).

CCC: Catechism of the Catholic Church; DV: Dei Verbum; GS: Gaudium et Spes; LG: Lumen Gentium; NDC: National Directory for Catechesis; PO: Presbyterorum Ordinis; SC: Sacrosanctum Concilium; UR: Decree on Eucmenism; . These documents can be found online at www.vatican.va or www.usccb.org.



Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about the Real Presence? Check out the following books and websites for more information:

- www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0901.asp
- “US Catholic Catechism for Adults”, USCCB, 2006
- Your Sunday Reader Podcast for 5/25/08: www.sundayprep.blogspot.com

These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.

“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement [Draft]:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.