

Know Your Faith

Session 4 – The Eucharist

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.
V. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created.

R. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

The Real Presence

- I. The Catholic Teaching
 - a. Really, Truly, Substantially
 - i. **“How is Christ present in the Eucharist? -** Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist in a unique and incomparable way. He is present in a true, real and substantial way, with his Body and his Blood, with his Soul and his Divinity. In the Eucharist, therefore, there is present in a sacramental way, that is, under the Eucharistic species of bread and wine, Christ whole and entire, God and Man” (CCCC 282).
 - b. Transubstantiation
 - i. **“What is the meaning of *transubstantiation*? -**
Transubstantiation means the change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of wine into the substance of his Blood. This change is brought about in the eucharistic prayer through the efficacy of the word of Christ and by the action of the Holy Spirit. However, the outward characteristics of bread and wine, that is the “eucharistic species”, remain unaltered” (CCCC 283).
- II. Prefigured in the Old Testament
 - a. Melchizedek - Genesis 14:18-20 – “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, ¹⁹ and he blessed Abram, saying,
"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.
²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
who delivered your enemies into your hand."
Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.”
 - b. The Passover – See Exodus 12 – To be saved from slavery and death, a lamb would be sacrificed, it’s blood spread on the door posts, and they flesh of the lamb was consumed. This feast was to be a perpetual feast for the Jewish people. John the Baptist calls Jesus, “the Lamb of God.”

- c. The Manna in the Desert – The miraculous bread from Heaven that sustained the Israelite people in their desert wanderings journeying to the Promised Land.
- III. Promised in John 6
- a. When does John 6 take place? – “The Jewish Passover Feast was near” (John 6:4)
 - b. Jesus doesn’t correct their literal understanding
 - i. If Jesus is a good moral teacher, and He meant to speak symbolically, but His listeners took him literally (as is the case here), He would have been morally obligated to correct their misunderstanding. To not do so would be to allow grave scandal.
 - c. Jesus intensifies His language
 - i. Eat my flesh *and* drink my blood; Verse 51 → Verse 53
 - ii. Repetition – Six times between verse 53 and 59, Jesus reiterates the reality of what He means.
 - iii. Jesus changes His word for “eat”
 - 1. Up through verse 53, Jesus uses a common Greek verb, *phago* – “to eat”
 - 2. In verses 54, 65, 57, he uses a new verb, *trogo* – closer to “to gnaw,” or “to munch.”
 - iv. Verse 55: “For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.” How does this square with a symbolic interpretation of Jesus’ words?
 - v. Question: In light of all of John 6, especially verse 55, *what more would Jesus have needed to say if he had meant to be understood literally?*
 - d. The problem with a symbolic interpretation – what does it mean to “symbolically” eat someone’s flesh and drink their blood?
 - i. Psalm 27:2 – “When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall.”
 - ii. Isaiah 49:26 - I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh; they will be drunk on their own blood, as with wine. Then all mankind will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."
 - iii. Micah 3:3 – “...who eat my people's flesh, strip off their skin and break their bones in pieces; who chop them up like meat for the pan, like flesh for the pot?"
 - iv. To symbolically “eat one’s flesh” meant in Jesus’ time to persecute, assault, or destroy.
 - v. So, was Jesus speaking symbolically and saying, “Whoever persecutes, assaults, and destroys me will have eternal life?”
 - e. Objection 1: What about all of the other times Jesus uses words symbolically, like “I am the door,” or “I am the vine?” Why is this any different?
 - i. Jesus does not correct or explain His hearers as mistaken when they take him literally. He does correct or explain this kind of mistake in other passages: John 3:3-5; John 11:11-14; John 8:31-36; even John 6:32-35.

- ii. Other passages, like this one, where people take Jesus literally, and he confirms and repeats: Matthew 9:2-6; John 8:56-59
 - iii. We can see the natural meaning of these other metaphors: Jesus is *like* a vine. Jesus is *like* a door. How is Jesus' flesh like bread metaphorically?
 - f. Objection 2: John 6:63 - "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."
 - i. Above, Jesus has used the phrase "my flesh," now the phrase "the flesh" is used. Are these two phrases referring to the same thing?
 - ii. If "the flesh" refers to "Christ's flesh," does this mean that for the Christian, Christ's flesh "counts for nothing?" Is that what Jesus is saying?
 - iii. No! Christ's flesh is of great avail. It was through his suffering, death, and resurrection *in the flesh* that He won salvation.
 - iv. Jesus is referring here, rather, to a supernatural understanding (spirit), rather than natural (flesh).
- IV. Fulfilled at the Last Supper
 - a. A Passover meal
 - i. A link to the events and words of John 6.
 - ii. A link to the Passover lamb sacrificed and consumed.
 - b. The language of Jesus
 - c. Objection: But it looks like bread, tastes like bread, gets digested like bread. How can we really believe that it is Christ?
 - i. When he walked the earth, Christ looked only human, sounded only human, and died like a mere human. But He was God. In fact, when He was in His mother's womb as only two-cells, *THAT* was God as well. 2000 years ago, His divinity was veiled and we beheld His humanity. Is it also hard to think that, in the Eucharist, now both his divinity *and* humanity are veiled under the appearance of bread and wine?
 - ii. Doesn't the Eucharist just perfectly fit the pattern that God has revealed of Himself: the God who is self-emptying and condescends to meet His creatures?
- V. St. Paul's Testimony
 - a. Institution Narrative (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)
 - b. "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:27).
 - i. How could eating and drinking a symbol unworthily make one guilty of the body and blood of the Lord?
 - c. "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28-29).
- VI. The Witness of the Fathers
 - a. "Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to

the mind of God. . . . They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in his goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes" (Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 6:2–7:1 [A.D. 110]).

- b. "We call this food Eucharist, and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration and is thereby living as Christ enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nurtured, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus" (Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 66 [A.D. 151]).
- c. "He has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be his own blood, from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own body, from which he gives increase unto our bodies. When, therefore, the mixed cup [wine and water] and the baked bread receives the Word of God and becomes the Eucharist, the body of Christ, and from these the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they say that the flesh is not capable of receiving the gift of God, which is eternal life—flesh which is nourished by the body and blood of the Lord, and is in fact a member of him?" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5:2 [AD 189]).
- d. "'And she [Wisdom] has furnished her table' [Prov. 9:2] . . . refers to his [Christ's] honored and undefiled body and blood, which day by day are administered and offered sacrificially at the spiritual divine table, as a memorial of that first and ever-memorable table of the spiritual divine supper [i.e., the Last Supper]" (Hippolytus, Fragment from *Commentary on Proverbs* [A.D. 217]).
- e. "Formerly there was baptism in an obscure way . . . now, however, in full view, there is regeneration in water and in the Holy Spirit. Formerly, in an obscure way, there was manna for food; now, however, in full view, there is the true food, the flesh of the Word of God, as he himself says: 'My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink' [John 6:55]" (Origen, *Homilies on Numbers* 7:2 [A.D. 248]).
- f. "The bread and the wine of the Eucharist before the holy invocation of the adorable Trinity were simple bread and wine, but the invocation having been made, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ" (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 19:7 [A.D. 350]).

"Do not, therefore, regard the bread and wine as simply that; for they are, according to the Master's declaration, the body and blood of Christ. Even

though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but be fully assured by the faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the body and blood of Christ. . . . [Since you are] fully convinced that the apparent bread is not bread, even though it is sensible to the taste, but the body of Christ, and that the apparent wine is not wine, even though the taste would have it so, . . . partake of that bread as something spiritual, and put a cheerful face on your soul" (ibid., 22:6, 9).

- VII.** Summary: A plain reading of the text of scripture shows a belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This was the common understanding of the church for a millennium. There is unanimous consent from every early Christian, that Christ was uniquely present in the Eucharist. No serious challenge of this doctrine arose until the 16th century.

The Sacrifice of the Mass

- I. Prefigured in the Old Testament
 - a. Passover lamb – A sacrificial meal in which the victim was consumed. A perpetual feast in which the event it prepares for (the Passover) is once again made present and effective in the lives of the worshippers. The unity of Passover: Exodus is reflected in the unity of Eucharist/Calvary
 - b. Malachi 1:11 – “My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations,” says the LORD Almighty.”
- II. The Language of the Last Supper
 - a. Luke 22:19-20 – “And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body **given for you**; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, **which is poured out for you**.”
- III. The Fathers of the Church
 - a. "Assemble on the Lord's Day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until he has been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice [Matt. 5:23–24]. For this is the offering of which the Lord has said, 'Everywhere and always bring me a sacrifice that is undefiled, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is the wonder of nations' [Mal. 1:11, 14]" (*Didache* 14 [A.D. 70]).
 - b. "Our sin will not be small if we eject from the episcopate those who blamelessly and holily have offered its sacrifices. Blessed are those presbyters who have already finished their course, and who have obtained a fruitful and perfect release" (Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians* 44:4–5 [A.D. 80]).
 - c. "Make certain, therefore, that you all observe one common Eucharist; for there is but one Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and but one cup of union with his Blood, and one single altar of sacrifice—even as there is also but

one bishop, with his clergy and my own fellow servitors, the deacons. This will ensure that all your doings are in full accord with the will of God" (Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians* 4 [A.D. 110]).

- d. "God speaks by the mouth of Malachi, one of the twelve [minor prophets], as I said before, about the sacrifices at that time presented by you: 'I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord, and I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands; for from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name has been glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name is great among the Gentiles . . . [Mal. 1:10–11]. He then speaks of those Gentiles, namely us [Christians] who in every place offer **sacrifices to him, that is, the bread of the Eucharist and also the cup of the Eucharist**' (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 41 [A.D. 155]).
- e. "He took from among creation that which is bread, and gave thanks, saying, 'This is my body.' The cup likewise, which is from among the creation to which we belong, he confessed to be his blood. He taught the new sacrifice of the new covenant, of which Malachi, one of the twelve [minor] prophets, had signified beforehand: 'You do not do my will, says the Lord Almighty, and I will not accept a sacrifice at your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure sacrifice; for great is my name among the Gentiles, says the Lord Almighty' [Mal. 1:10–11]. By these words he makes it plain that the former people will cease to make offerings to God; but that in every place sacrifice will be offered to him, and indeed, a pure one, for his name is glorified among the Gentiles" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4:17:5 [A.D. 189]).
- f. Summary - "The Eucharist was regarded as the distinctively Christian sacrifice. . . . Malachi's prediction (1:10–11) that the Lord would reject Jewish sacrifices and instead would have "a pure offering" made to him by the Gentiles in every place was seized upon by Christians as a prophecy of the Eucharist. The *Didache* indeed actually applies the term *thusia*, or sacrifice, to the Eucharist. . . .
"It was natural for early Christians to think of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. The fulfillment of prophecy demanded a solemn Christian offering, and the rite itself was wrapped in the sacrificial atmosphere with which our Lord invested the Last Supper. The words of institution, 'Do this' (*touto poieite*), must have been charged with sacrificial overtones for second-century ears; Justin at any rate understood them to mean, 'Offer this.' . . . The bread and wine, moreover, are offered 'for a memorial (*eis anamnasin*) of the passion,' a phrase which in view of his identification of them with the Lord's body and blood implies much more than an act of purely spiritual recollection" (J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* [Full Reference], 196–7).

IV. The Catholic Teaching

- a. **“What is the Eucharist?** - The Eucharist is the very sacrifice of the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus which he instituted to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until his return in glory. Thus he entrusted to his Church this memorial of his death and Resurrection. It is a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet, in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us” (CCCC 271).
- b. **“In what way is the Eucharist a *memorial* of the sacrifice of Christ?** – The Eucharist is a *memorial* in the sense that it makes present and actual the sacrifice which Christ offered to the Father on the cross, once and for all on behalf of mankind. The sacrificial character of the Holy Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution, “This is my Body which is given for you” and “This cup is the New Covenant in my Blood that will be shed for you” (Luke 22:19-20). The sacrifice of the cross and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one and the same sacrifice*. The priest and the victim are the same; only the manner of offering is different: in a bloody manner on the cross, in an unbloody manner in the Eucharist” (CCCC 280)

V. Misunderstandings

- a. At the mass, Catholics re-sacrifice Christ on the altar again and again. But Hebrews 10:10-13 says: “We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, ¹⁴because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”
 - a. Catholic teaching is not that this is a re-sacrifice, or that it is any *new* sacrifice at all. Christ has suffered once and for all, and, seated at the right hand of God, dies no more. This is a re-presentation of that one sacrifice; a making present of the work done once for all on Calvary, for us now.

VI. The Language of the Mass

- a. Eucharistic Prayer I: “Through him we ask you to accept and bless these gifts we **offer you in sacrifice**... We **offer you this sacrifice of praise** for ourselves and those who are dear to us.... and from the many gifts you have given us we offer to you, God of glory and majesty, **this holy and perfect sacrifice**: the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation... Almighty God, we pray that your angel may take this sacrifice to your altar in heaven. Then, as we receive from this **altar** the sacred body and blood of your Son, let us be filled with every grace and blessing...”
- b. Eucharistic Prayer II: “In memory of his death and resurrection, we offer you, Father, this life-giving bread, this saving cup.”
- c. Eucharistic Prayer III: “Father, calling to mind the death your Son endured for our salvation, his glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven, and

ready to greet him when he comes again, **we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.** Look with favor on your Church's offering, and see the **Victim whose death has reconciled us to yourself**... Lord, may this sacrifice, which has made our peace with you, advance the peace and salvation of all the world..."

d. Eucharistic Prayer IV: "...looking forward to his coming in glory, **we offer you his body and blood, the acceptable sacrifice** which brings salvation to the whole world... Lord, remember those for whom we offer this sacrifice..."

VII. Summary: The importance of the mass is not *only* in the Real Presence of Christ, but in the *action* of Christ. In the mass, we are entering into the moment of our salvation. We are receiving the fruit of the sacrifice of the cross because that sacrifice is made present to us in an incomparable way.

Conclusions

- 1. In John 6, why doesn't Jesus call back those who are leaving Him and correct their literal understanding?**
- 2. What *does* Jesus do when they question His teaching?**
- 3. Verse 55: "For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink." How does this square with a symbolic interpretation of Jesus' words?**
- 4. If Jesus wants to be literal in John 6, what *more* would he have to say?**
- 5. "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:27). How could eating and drinking a symbol unworthily make one guilty of the body and blood of the Lord?**
- 6. Why does every early Church writer have a Catholic understanding of the Eucharist? Can we point to one writer in the first Christian millennium who held what Calvin or Zwingli held?**

Know Your Faith Revised Calendar

- February 22nd – The Eucharist (Social Hall)
- March 1st – No Session; Join us For Dr. McNamara's Presentation in the MC Chapel
- March 8th – Confession (Social Hall)
- March 15th – No Session; Parish Mission
- March 22nd – Purgatory (Zuker Hall)
- March 29th – The Papacy (Zuker Hall)
- April 5th – No Session; Easter Monday
- April 12th – Mary (Zuker Hall)

John 6:35-69 (NIV)

³⁵Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. ³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

⁴¹At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴²They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

⁴³"Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. ⁴⁴"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets: "They will all be taught by God."^[d] Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁴⁶No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. ⁵⁰But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

⁵²Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

⁵³Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." ⁵⁹He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

⁶⁰On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

⁶¹Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶²What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit^[e] and they are life. ⁶⁴Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. ⁶⁵He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."

⁶⁶From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

⁶⁷"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."