

## Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist



Bread is a staple of life. It has been around for thousands and thousands of years. In Jesus' day, if you shared bread with your neighbors, it meant you were willing to share your life with them.

The bread you see at Mass looks more like a *wafer* rather than the kind of bread you have at home. This wafer is "unleavened bread". Unleavened bread has no yeast in it. Yeast is what makes bread rise.

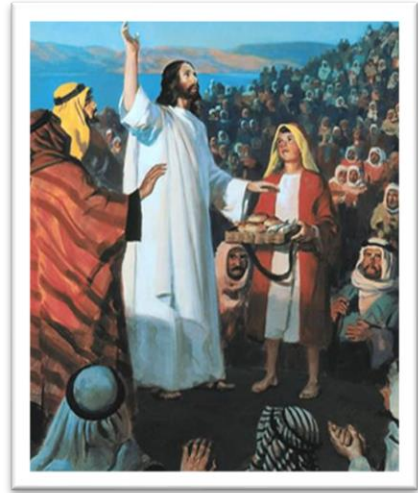
The tradition of eating unleavened bread comes from the Jewish feast of the *Passover* (Exodus 12:1-12). The Israelites ate unleavened bread because they were in a hurry to get away from the Egyptians. Normal bread, with yeast, takes an hour or two to rise. The Israelites had no time. They wanted to get out from under Pharaoh's rule as quickly as possible!

Centuries later, Jesus and the Apostles ate unleavened bread at a Passover meal (the *Last Supper*). The Apostles continued this tradition (Acts 2:42) because Jesus said, "This is my body" (Matthew 26:26), and "Do this in memory of me" (Luke 22:19). We remember Jesus, and are nourished by his body, when we celebrate *Holy Communion* as a family.

As Catholics, we believe in the *real presence* of Jesus' body, blood, soul and divinity in the *Eucharist* and *Precious Blood* (the *bread* and *wine* that has been *Consecrated* by the Priest). In

John's record of the Gospel, Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."  
(John 6:53-54)

Jesus instituted a *New Covenant* at the Last Supper between himself and his followers. A covenant is an *oath* between two people. This New Covenant offers us the forgiveness of our sins, and eternal life, if we have faith in Jesus and follow his commands (John 14:15-17). If we want to know everything Jesus commanded us to do, (and we should because he came to teach us how to become just like himself) we must read a little of the Gospels each day:



For by one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being *consecrated*. 15 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying: 16 "This is the *covenant* I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord: 'I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them upon their minds,'" 17 he also says: "Their sins and their evildoing I will remember no more." (Hebrews 10:14-17)

During the Consecration of the host (*epiclesis*), we are living the moment of the Last Supper with Jesus in real time. We then remember the sacrifices Jesus made for us during his *Passion*. The *Passion* is all the events after the Last Supper leading up to, and including, the crucifixion of our Lord.

By sacrificing his life for us, Jesus proved by his resurrection that he truly is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). If Jesus lives in us, we will live with him for all eternity.

No other religious leader, before or after Jesus, has ever promised us eternal life *in* them. Only God can make that promise. No other religious leader predicted their death, then rose from their death, except for Jesus. Again, this is how we know Jesus truly is, "the way, the truth and the life..." (John 14:6).