Why the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is *real*...

Jesus said...

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my *flesh*." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his *flesh* to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "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 6:51-54)

"It doesn't matter if we understand *how* the Body and Blood of Christ is present in the Holy Eucharist, we should trust that Jesus knows what he is talking about even if we do not. After all, the Son of God is not a liar…" - *Fr. Mark Matthias*

Welcome! Thank you for taking the time to learn why Catholics believe in the *Real Presence* of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist!

Catholics are taught to believe Jesus is truly present in the Holy Eucharist even if we don't understand *how* this is possible. At the Last Supper, Jesus clearly commands us to *eat his body* and *drink his blood* (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:14-20). Some people think Jesus was using *symbolic* or *figurative* language when he said this. However, the more we study what Jesus said in other parts of the Gospel, the more it becomes clear that Jesus was speaking *literally*, not figuratively.

Here is one example of how we know that the "bread" and "wine" Jesus gives us to eat is his actual Body and Blood. In Chapter 26 of Matthew's account of the Last Supper, he writes:

> *Now as they were eating, Jesus took **bread**, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, **"Take, eat; this is my body**." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "**Drink of it**, all of you; **for this is my blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the **forgiveness of sins**…" (Matthew 26:26-28)*

Jesus just commanded us to *eat his body,* and *drink his blood* for the *forgiveness of sins*. We know that only God has the power to

forgive sins. If Jesus is not truly present in the consecrated Bread and Wine he gives us to eat, then how are our sins *forgiven*? Regular sandwich bread cannot cleanse us of our sins; neither can plain wine or grape juice. However, the *Real Presence* of Christ in the Holy Eucharist can cleanse our body and soul of our sins (see, CCC 1393-1394, 1416).

By closely studying each word that Jesus speaks to us at the Last Supper, and in Chapter 6 of John's record of the Gospel, we will begin to understand that Jesus said what he *meant*, and *meant* what he said!

For example, in Chapter 6 of St. John's record of the Gospel, Jesus tells us that the bread he will give us to eat one day will truly be his Body and Blood:

> *"Truly, truly, I say to you, **he who believes** has **eternal life**. I am the **bread of life**. Your fathers ate the **manna** in the wilderness, and they **died**. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may **eat of it** and **not die**. I am the **living bread** which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will **live for ever**; and the **bread** which I shall give for the **life** of the world is my **flesh**..." (John 6:47-51)*

In this passage, the first thing Jesus says to us is, he who *believes* what I am about to tell you will have *eternal life.*

Jesus knows that what he is about to say will sound outrageous to our ears. And yet, he calls us to *believe* and to walk by *faith*, not by sight.

Jesus then says, "*Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died…"* The *manna* their fathers ate in the wilderness did not contain the Divine Life of Christ. It was the same kind of bread we use to make our sandwiches or dip into fondue. This bread fed their bodies, but *not* their souls. That's why they died...

However, the Bread Jesus will give us will be his own Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity! Jesus wants to feed our soul with his Divine Life! That's why he is the *Bread of Life*! It will be his Divine Life living and growing in us that will cleanse us of our sins and keep us spiritually alive—*through him, with him and in him*—for all eternity!

Here is another "piece of the puzzle" that helps us understand why Jesus commands us to *eat his flesh* and *drink his blood*.

In the *Old Testament* when you made a sin-offering to God, at the end of the ritual you had to *eat* what you sacrificed in order to complete the ritual *(see, Leviticus, Chapters 6 to 7).* The same instructions applied to various other rituals (see, Exodus 12:1-14, Exodus 29:29-37).

In the first Chapter of St. John's record of the Gospel, John the Baptist calls Jesus, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (v. 29). At the end of his ministry, Jesus will offer himself to God the Father as sin-offering for the forgiveness of our sins. And just like in the *Old Testament,* at the end of the ritual, you have to "eat the lamb." That's why Jesus will give us his *flesh* to eat in the appearance of bread and wine (see, CCC 1333).

I hope these first few paragraphs have piqued your interest in learning more about the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. There are many other things Jesus said and did that prove he was not just speaking *figuratively* or *symbolically* when he commanded us to *eat his flesh* and *drink his blood.* The more we learn about them, the more we will understand why the Real Presence of Jesus is *real*...

- *Fr. Mark Matthias*

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Why did Jesus command us to "eat his flesh" and "drink his blood?"

There are several main reasons why Jesus told us we must "eat his flesh" and "drink his blood" or we would have "no life" in us (John 6:51-58):

1. So we could be nourished and sustained with his Divine Life *(see, John 6:33-59, 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, CCC 398, 460, 1374, 1413)*

2. So we could be continually purified from our sins with his Divine Life until we are "divinized" in him *(see, Matthew 26:26-28, Jeremiah 31:31-34, CCC 1393-1395, CCC 1416, CCC 1988, CCC 260)*

3. So we could partake in the ritual Jesus began when he allowed himself to be the Sacrificial Lamb for the forgiveness of our sins. In order to be cleansed of our sins, we have to "eat the lamb" *(see, John 1:29; Exodus 12:5-11; Leviticus chapters 6-7 and 16)*

4. So all of his followers could be one body (community) in Christ *(see, John 14:15-21, 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 26-27, CCC 1331)*

All of these reasons will be explained in more detail as we dig deeper into understanding why our Lord's Presence is *truly* present in the Holy Eucharist.

Let us begin our journey in Chapter 6 of St. John's record of the Gospel. Bible scholars refer to John 6 as the *"Bread of Life"* discourse...

The *Bread of Life* discourse...

Our Bible study about the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist begins with Chapter 6 of St. John's record of the Gospel. St. John begins Chapter 6 by telling us how Jesus fed five thousand people with just five loaves of bread and two fish:

> *4 Now the **Passover**, the **feast** of the Jews, was at hand. 5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" 6 This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?" 10 Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place; so the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 **Jesus then took the loaves**, and when he had **given thanks**, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted." (John 6:4-11)*

The *Feeding of the Five Thousand* is a foreshadowing of Jesus feeding billions of his followers around the world one day with the Bread of Life (*himself*) (see, CCC 1335).

Notice how St. John begins this passage by letting the reader to know that the "Passover feast" was at hand. It would be at a Passover meal one-year later in Jerusalem that Jesus would institute the Holy Eucharist and command us to "eat his body" and "drink his blood" (see, Matthew 26:17-19; 26-28).

The first Passover meal was to save people from the Angel of Death...

What we Christians call the Last Supper was originally the celebration of the Jewish Passover (see, CCC 1362-1367).

Just as an unblemished Lamb was sacrificed at the Passover as a *ransom* to God to save the first-born from the Angel of Death, Jesus is the new Passover Lamb who saves those who believe in him from spiritual death.

At every Mass (a reenactment of the Last Supper) Jesus invites us to dine with him at the Passover meal. But Jesus is not only the host of the meal, he's the main course as well!

In the *Old Testament*, when you offered God a "sin-offering," a "peace offering," or a "thanksgiving offering," in order to complete the ritual you had to *eat* what you sacrificed. At the Last Supper, it seems Jesus is combining several of these offerings into the one sacrifice of himself:

1. Jesus is a *ransom* to God to spare us from spiritual death. He makes *peace* with God for us paying the debt for our sins with his own life. He is offering a "life for a life" as described in Chapter 16 of the *Book of Leviticus* (see also, CCC 601 and 1329).

2. Jesus is also making himself a *sin-offering* to God the Father as the *"Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29, see also CCC 608); and

3. Because Jesus gives "thanks" to the Father at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-27), it appears he is also making himself a *thanksgiving offering.* During the Eucharistic Prayer, listen to how many times we "give thanks" to God for the gift of eternal life through His Son, Jesus (see, CCC 1328; 2637-2638; 2781). By the way, the Greek word for "thanksgiving" is *eucharistein*.

Please read Chapters 1 through 7 in the *Book of Leviticus* and Chapter 12 in the *Book of Exodus* to learn more about the different *offerings* to God.

"Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life…"

After Jesus fed the *Five Thousand*, he crossed the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum. His disciples took a boat, but Jesus decided to walk—*on water* (see, John 6:16-21).

The next day, the people who Jesus fed on the mountain came looking for him in Capernaum. As you read the following scripture passages, pay close attention to the words that are in ***bold print***. These words contain important clues from Jesus that help us to realize that he was not speaking figuratively or symbolically when later on in John 6 he will tell us, *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you…"*

The first thing Jesus says to the crowd that has been following him is:

> *26 "…**Truly, truly**, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw **signs**, but because you **ate your fill** of the **loaves**.*
> *27 **Do not labor** for the **food** which **perishes**, but for the **food** which **endures to eternal life**, which the **Son of man** will **give** to you, for on him has God the Father set his seal…" (John 6:26-27)*

When Jesus uses the phrase, "Truly, truly" or "Amen, amen" it means what he is about to say is not only true, he knows it to be true through first-hand knowledge of the subject which means his understanding and clarity on the subject is *irrefutable!*

Simply put, Jesus wants us to know that what he is about to say is the *Gospel truth!*"

Jesus then goes on to explain in verse 27 why people are seeking him. They want to eat their fill of the bread he created for them the day before.

The people are not impressed that Jesus performed a miracle by multiplying the five barley loaves and two fish into enough food to feed 5000 people, they are there for their next *free meal!* This is why Jesus tells them *"Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life."*

The food that perishes is the bread we use to make our tuna fish sandwiches. Jesus tells us *not to labor* for this food, but for the food that lasts for all eternity—*himself!*

Verse 27 is one of the first clues of how we know that the food Jesus wants to give us is not a "symbol" of his Divine Life, but his *actual* Divine Life. A "symbol" is something that reminds us of something else; the symbol itself does not contain what the real thing is—it's just a *symbol* of it. And yet, Jesus makes a clear distinction that the bread he wants to give us is food that *endures to eternal life.* Jesus endures to eternal life, therefore, the food he will give us must be *himself!*

In verse 27, Jesus also states that he (*the Son of man*) will be the one who gives us this food that endures to eternal life. At every Catholic Mass, wine and unleavened bread (also called, *hosts*) are brought to the altar and given to the Priest. A Catholic Priest acts *in persona Christi capitis,* which is Latin for "*in the person of Christ"* (see, CCC 1348, 1375). However, it is Jesus himself—*not the Priest*—who gives us himself to eat (CCC 1375, 1410).

When the Priest—*in the person of Christ*—says the *Eucharistic Prayer,* he calls upon the Holy Spirit to consecrate the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. This is exactly

what Christ did at the *Last Supper:*

*"...he took **bread** and giving thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying: 'Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for **this is my Body**, which will be given up for you...' In a similar way when supper was ended, Jesus took **the chalice**, and once more giving thanks, he gave it to his disciples saying: 'Take this, all of you, and **drink from it**, for this is the chalice **of my Blood...**'" (the Eucharistic Prayer from the Roman Missal, based on Matthew 26:26-28, see also, CCC 1348, 1375)*

Jesus is *not* a liar...

Paragraph 1381 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that we must have *faith* in what Jesus tells us, and that Christ would never lie to us!

That in this Sacrament are the true Body of Christ and his true Blood is something that 'cannot be apprehended by the senses,' says St. Thomas, 'but only by faith, which relies on divine authority.' For this reason, in a commentary on Luke 22:19, St. Cyril says: 'Do not doubt whether this is true, but rather receive the words of the Savior in faith, for since he is the truth, he cannot lie...'" (CCC 1381, see also, Luke 1:35; John 8:29; 1 Peter 2:21-22; 1 John 3:5; Hebrews 4:14-15)

Jesus just told us that the bread he gave to his disciples to eat was *his body!* He also said the wine in the chalice he gave them to drink was *his blood!* The best proof that we are consuming the Body and Blood of Christ come from the very words that Christ spoke! Remember, Jesus is *not* a liar!

According to Jesus, we must have *faith* that he is truly present in the Holy Eucharist...

*28 Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you **believe in him** whom he has sent." 30 So they said to him, "Then what **sign** do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What **work** do you perform? 31 Our fathers ate*

*the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, `He gave them **bread from heaven** to eat.'" 32 Jesus then said to them, "**Truly, truly**, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; **my Father** gives you the **true bread** from heaven. 33 For the **bread of God** is that which **comes down from heaven**, and **gives life** to the world." (John 6:28-33)*

The question posed to Jesus by those seeking him is, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" (v.28). Jesus responds by saying, "This is the work of God, that you *believe in him* whom he has sent" (v.29).

"For those who have faith, no evidence is necessary; for those without faith, no evidence is ever enough..."

- St. Thomas Aquinas

As we all know, every relationship takes work. When it comes to our relationship with God, the first *work* we have to do is *believe* what He tells us!

Jesus knows that what he is about to say will shock us! This is why he tells us we must *believe in him* and *trust* that what he is about to say is *true!*

Jesus didn't say for us to *analyze* what he is about to say, or decide for ourselves if what he says is *true*; he tells us the first work in our relationship with him is to *believe* what he tell us!

We believe what Jesus tells us is true because he is the Son of God. We also believe what Jesus tells us because our eternal life with him in heaven one day depends on it. Believing in Jesus is literally a matter of *life* or *death*. This is what he will say to us when we get to verses 47 through 58 of John 6.

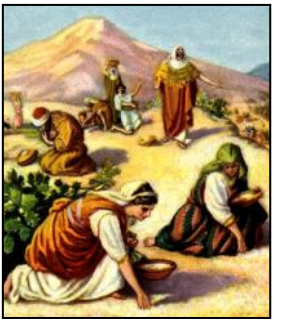
Therefore, the first lesson in believing in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is because… *Jesus said so!*

Remember, some words are meaningless unless the proper authority speaks them. If a friend walks up to you and says, "You're under arrest!" you would laugh at them. But if a Police Officer walks up to you and says, "You're under arrest!" you would have a very different reaction. The same exact words were spoken, but the *reality* of the situation has changed because of the *authority* and *power* of the one who spoke them!

In verse 30, the people then ask Jesus what "sign" will he do and what "work" will he perform to help them *believe* in him; they want Jesus to perform a miracle before their eyes so they will be convinced he is from God.

Maybe the people remembered how Moses prayed to God in the wilderness and God gave them "bread from heaven" (see, Exodus 16:4). They want to see if Jesus can top that!?

Jesus responds by first saying "Truly, truly I say to you" (v.32). Remember, this phrase means, "Not only do I know what I'm about to say is *true*, there's no refuting it!



Jesus then goes on to say that it was not Moses who gave the Israelites bread from heaven, it was God the Father who gave them bread from heaven, but this time, God the Father has given them the *true bread* from heaven—His own Son who is made of the same *eternal substance* as God the Father! That's why Jesus will refer to himself as the "Bread of Life!"

Jesus then says in verse 33 that the *bread of God* he is talking about *comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world.*

Sandwich bread does not "come down from heaven," it comes from the bakery or supermarket. Also, sandwich bread cannot

"give life to the world" because it does not contain the Divine Life of Christ in it.

Jesus came down from heaven when he was conceived in our Mother Mary's womb. Jesus continues to come down from heaven every time the Priest invokes the Holy Spirit to consecrate the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ at every Mass. It is the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist that "comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world!"

"I am the Bread of Life…"

> *34 They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always."*
> *35 Jesus said to them, "**I am the bread of life**; he who comes to me **shall not hunger**, and he who **believes** in me shall **never thirst**. (John 6:34-35)*

The people who hunger for this *Bread of Life* want it *always.* Jesus will remember this when he teaches us the *Lord's Prayer* and asks our Father to, *"Give us each day our daily bread"* (Luke 11:3; Matthew 6:11-12, CCC 2837, 2861).

Jesus also tells us that if we come to him for this *bread of life* we shall *not hunger,* and if we believe what he is telling us, we shall *never thirst*.

As we all know, after we eat, we will eventually get hungry again. Our life is a never ending quest for food and water, otherwise, our body would die. Also, there is no *natural* food that can sustain our body for all eternity. Therefore, Jesus *must* be talking about giving us food that can sustain that part of our being which was designed to last forever—*our soul!*

Our soul does not stay alive from the calories and nutrients we get from eating natural food. Our soul stays alive from the *supernatural food* of God—the *Holy Spirit!* This is why we

know that Jesus is not talking about giving us food to feed our body; he's talking about giving us food to *feed our soul!*

Therefore, the "bread" that Jesus wants to give us *must* contain his Real Presence. This is the only way we will *"not hunger"* or *"never thirst..."*

"What do you seek?"

In Chapter 1 of St. John's record of the Gospel, two disciples of John the Baptist see Jesus and begin to follow him. At one point, Jesus turns to them and asks, "What do you seek?" (John 1:38)

Many people seek happiness in life through the people they know, the places they go, or the things they own. And yet, even after experiencing all these things, they still feel an emptiness in their heart; a void in their soul that leaves them feeling unhappy.

What they don't realize is that their soul is *hungering* and *thirsting* for something more in life. They try and fill this hunger and thirst by knowing more people, going more places, or owning more things, but in the end, they still feel an emptiness or restlessness in their soul.

Everybody's got a hungry heart...

"Got a wife and kids in Baltimore, Jack, I went out for a ride and I never went back. Like a river that don't know where it's flowing, I took a wrong turn and I just kept going. Everybody's got a hungry heart. Everybody's got a hungry heart. Lay down your money and you play your part. Everybody's got a hungry, hungry heart…"

"Hungry Heart" was written and performed by Bruce Springsteen on his fifth album, The River.
It was the lead single on the album released in 1980 and became Springsteen's first big hit reaching #5 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

Why is it that so many have a "hungry heart?" What are they seeking in life to fill the void they feel in their heart?

Maybe it's not *"what,"* but *"who?"*

What is missing in their life is not *something,* but rather *someone*. What they have yet to realize is: that which is eternal—*our soul*—can never be satisfied with that which is temporary—the *people*, *places* and *things* of this world.

The only thing that can satisfy that which is eternal—*our soul*—is that which is also eternal—*God*… This is why in his book, *Confessions*, St. Augustine of Hippo wrote: *"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you..."*

Our soul thirsts for the Lord...

The *Book of Psalms* was written thousands of years ago. There is timeless wisdom in it. Psalm 42 speaks of the emptiness we feel in our soul if we are trying to fill it with anything other than the presence of God...

As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When can I enter and see the face of God? (Psalm 42:1-2, NABRE)

"You have seen me and yet do not believe…"

> *36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet* ***do not believe****. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; 39 and this is the will of him who sent me,* ***that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me****, but* ***raise it up at the last day****. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and* ***believes in him*** *should have* ***eternal life****; and I will* ***raise him up at the last day****."*
> *(John 6:36-40)*

In an effort to help us understand how serious Jesus is about what he is telling us, he will tell us *four times* throughout John 6 that we must *believe* what he is telling us.

It is saddens me how many of our Protestant brothers and sisters do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ. It saddens me even more how many *Catholics* do not believe as well...

According to a 2019 Pew Report, 69% of Catholics do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ. They believe the "bread" and "wine" are merely *symbols* of the Body and Blood of Christ just as many Protestants do.[1]

Based on Sacred Scripture, the Catholic Church has always professed that the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ is truly present in the Holy Eucharist:

> *In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained." (Council of Trent [1551]; DS 1651). "This presence is called 'real' by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present" (CCC 1374, Paul VI, MF 39, see also, CCC 1413).*

I firmly believe the reason why so many Catholics do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is because they were not properly catechized to understand and believe in the Real Presence. This was my motivation to create this pamphlet to help people understand that Jesus said what he *meant*, and *meant* what he said.

1. Gregory A. Smith, Pew Research, August 2019, retrieved 3/2/2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/05/transubstantiation-eucharist-u-s-catholics/

"I am the bread which came down from heaven..."

> *41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, "**I am the bread which came down from heaven**." 42 They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, `I have come down from heaven'?" 43 Jesus answered them, "**Do not murmur** among yourselves. 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**. 45 It is written in the prophets, `**And they shall all be taught by God**.' Every one who has **heard** and **learned** from the Father comes to me. 46 Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father. (John 6:41-46)*

When Jesus says he is "the bread which came down from heaven," he is making a direct reference to when God rained *manna* down from heaven every day so the Israelites would have food to keep them alive:

> *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day…" (Exodus 16:4)*

Jesus is now the *bread* which comes down from heaven to keep us alive. The people are confused by what Jesus just said because they see a *person* standing before them, not a piece of "bread." However, he will become a piece of Bread in due time!

Annoyed at their lack of faith, Jesus tells them to stop their *murmuring*. Instead of convincing themselves what he just said is *not possible*, Jesus wants them to think of how it *is possible,* for with God, *all things are possible* (Mt 19:26).

Jesus deliberately used the word "murmur" as a reference to how the Israelites also doubted what God told them in the desert:

And the LORD said to Moses, "I have heard the murmurings of the people of Israel; say to them, `At twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'" (Exodus 11-12)

Jesus then reminds the people that *faith* is a gift from God that is offered to everyone. This is why Jesus says, *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day"* (v.44).

Jesus tells us in Chapter 17 of Matthew's record of the Gospel that if we have faith the size of a mustard seed, we can move mountains (vs.20). It's not "we" who move that mountain, it's God who moves the mountain of doubt in our minds because He takes the little bit of faith we give Him and then builds on it. Jesus is asking us to do the same thing when it comes to believing he is *literally* the Bread of Life! The reward for doing so, will be eternal life with him!

After Jesus assures the people that God the Father sent him, he then reminds them of what the Father said through the Prophet Isaiah, *"And they shall all be taught by God"* (Isaiah 54:13).

The Church Fathers believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist...

"No one may share the eucharist with us unless he believes that what we teach is true, unless he is washed in the regenerating waters of baptism for the remission of his sins, and unless he lives in accordance with the principles given us by Christ. We do not consume the Eucharistic bread and wine as if it were ordinary food and drink, for we have been taught that as Jesus Christ our Savior became a man of flesh and blood by the power of the Word of God, so also the food that our flesh and blood assimilates for its nourishment becomes the Flesh and Blood of the incarnate Jesus by the power of his own words contained in the prayer of thanksgiving..."

-St. Justin Martyr,
First Apology, Ch. 66 148-155AD

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was always trying to help people believe he was truly the Son of God. He did this by performing miracles, teaching Sacred Scripture like no one else ever did, and reminding people of the hundreds of prophecies from the Old Testament he was fulfilling.

Once we believe that Jesus is truly God on earth, there is no need to question what he tells us, because after all, God is not a liar. Keep this in mind when we get to verses 67 to 69 in John 6 where Jesus turns to the Apostles and asks them if they would like to walk away from him just like many others will do. Peter, convinced Jesus is truly the Son of God, will respond by saying, ""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).

Peter got it right! He didn't understand what Jesus was talking about at the time, but he trusted that because Jesus—*the Son of God—"truly, truly"* told him something, it must be true!

Do you believe? I mean ***really*** believe!?

There are many people today who say they "believe" in Jesus, but in reality, do not believe *everything* he says...

They don't believe in hell despite Jesus warning us about it more times than any other person in the Bible; they don't believe there is a Devil even though Jesus speaks of him throughout his ministry; they don't believe there are demons even though Jesus cast them out of numerous people; they don't believe they have to forgive others despite Jesus saying our sins won't be forgiven unless we forgive others (see, Matthew 6:15).

Btw, there are no sinners in heaven. If you haven't forgiven the sins of others, that means your sins remain on your soul preventing you from entering heaven... And of course, they don't believe the bread and wine Jesus blesses at the Last

Supper (and at every Mass) is truly his Body and Blood. Again, people say they "believe" in Jesus but they don't really take him at his word.

Remember, no one in the history of the world ever *predicted* their death and then *rose* from it; only Jesus did! And, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, no one would have been foolish enough to go around teaching a doctrine that promised people "eternal life" if the author who gave them that doctrine didn't prove it!

"Man does not live by bread alone..." (Matthew 4:4)

The Gospel According
John
CHAPTER 1

As Catholics, we feed our mind, body and soul with the Word of God and the Body and Blood of Christ. Both contain the Presence of Christ in them through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says:

"For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body." (Dei Verbum, EN 21, CCC 103)

After Jesus appeared to the Apostles (and many others) they were finally convinced that he was truly God on earth (John 20:28). As Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet *believe*..." (John 20:29).

"The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh..."

47 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 ***Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died****. 50* ***This is the bread which comes down from heaven****, that a* ***man may eat of it*** *and* ***not die****. 51* ***I am the living bread*** *which* ***came down from heaven****; if any one* ***eats of this bread****, he will* ***live for ever****; and the* ***bread*** *which I shall give for the* ***life of the world*** *is* ***my flesh****." (John 6:47-51)*

Jesus makes it clear that the *manna* the Israelites ate in the wilderness did not contain his Divine life; that's why they died. However, he wants to give us food so we will *not die!* The only way that can happen is if the food he gives us contains the very substance of God who is eternal!

In verses 32 and 33 of John 6, Jesus tells the people he is the "true Bread" that "comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world." Jesus says the same thing in verses 50 and 51. This left them scratching their heads as they tried to figure out what Jesus was talking about. Imagine their shock and horror when Jesus now says that the "bread" he is talking about is really his *flesh!*

"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

From this point forward in John 6, Jesus will begin to repeat what he says in order to help people realize he is *deadly serious* about what he is commanding us to do:

> *52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his **flesh** to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "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; 54 he who **eats my flesh** and **drinks my blood** has **eternal life**, and I will **raise him up** at the last day. 55 For **my flesh** is **food indeed**, and my **blood** is **drink indeed**. 56 He who **eats my flesh** and **drinks my blood abides in me**, and **I in him**. 57 As the living Father sent me, and **I live because of the Father**, so he who **eats me** will live because of me. 58 **This** is the **bread** which **came down from heaven**, not such as the fathers ate and **died**; he who **eats this bread** will **live for ever**." (John 6:52-58)*

When Jesus says, *"unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you,"* what *"life"* is he talking about? He's talking about *his* life!

If the bread we consume during Holy Communion does not contain the Real Presence of Christ, then how can this bread "raise" us on the last day? Jesus rose on the third day after he was crucified because his is Divine. The only way we could be *raised up* is if we too are made of the same Divine substance that he is made of! What Jesus wants us to understand is, "You are what you eat!"

Regular sandwich bread keeps our bodies alive, but Jesus is talking about keeping our souls alive in him! This happens by consuming His Divine Presence, thus preserving our body and soul for our Resurrection with him one day. This is why Jesus goes on to say, *"For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (v.55-56).*

When we "abide" in someone, it means we are intimately connected to that

The Day of Preparation...

According to Chapters 12 and 20 of the *Book of Exodus*, and Chapter 23 of the *Book of Leviticus*, there were many rules you had to follow to prepare for the celebration of the Sabbath and the Passover Feast. The day before these celebrations was known as the "Day of Preparation."

For Passover, lambs were slaughtered and hung on wooden posts so the blood could drain out of them. This reminds us of how our Lord hung upon the cross as the blood drained out of him. The blood had to be drained out of the lamb because *eating the lamb* was part of the ritual of having the Angel of Death *pass over* you (see, Exodus, Ch. 12).

According Chapters 1 through 8 of the *Book of Leviticus*, you had to *eat* whatever you offered to God as a sacrifice. Jesus offered himself to God the Father as the sacrificial lamb who takes away the sins of the world (see, John 1:29). Now you know why Jesus gives us his Body and Blood to eat under the appearance of bread and wine—so we can *eat the lamb* and partake in ritual of having our sins forgiven. It is by Christ imparting his Divine Life and Grace to us through his Word and Sacraments that he cleanses us of our sins and unites us with him for all eternity...

someone. Jesus is telling us we will be intimately connected with him when we eat his flesh and drink his blood!

Jesus then goes on to tell us in verse 57 that if we consume his flesh and blood, the same Divine Life that is in God the Father and him will also be in us: *"As the living Father sent me, and I **live** because of the Father, so he who eats me will **live** because of me."*

Again, "We are what we eat!" Or in this case, "We are *who* we eat!"

In verse 58, Jesus repeats what he said earlier in verse 49 and 50 by saying, *"This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever."*

The bread (*manna*) that came down from heaven to feed the Israelites in the desert did not contain the Divine Life of Christ in it—that's why they died. However, the bread that Jesus wants to give us is so we can *"live for ever!"*

If the "bread" and "wine" that Jesus gives us at Holy Communion does not contain the Real Presence of Christ, then how can plain bread and wine give us *eternal life*? It can't... But the Real Presence of Christ in the consecrated Bread and Wine—*can!*

Why does Jesus say the same thing *four times* in a row?

After the people dispute among themselves how Jesus can give them his "flesh" to eat, Jesus responds by once again using the phrase, *"Truly, truly"* which means, "what I am about to tell you is the absolute truth, there is no refuting it!" Jesus then goes on to tell us the same thing *four times* in a row when he says, *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his*

blood, you have no life in you…"

This is the only place in the entire Gospel were Jesus repeats himself four times in a row. Do you think he is serious about what he is saying? Yes! Because we do the same thing!

Do you remember the last time you said something to someone and you could see in their eyes they didn't understand what you were saying, or they simply didn't *believe* what you were saying? What did you do?

You repeated what you said so they would know you knew *exactly* what you said, and *exactly* what you meant!

Why did Jesus choose bread and wine to transmit his Divine Life to us?

It may be because bread and wine were used in the Jewish culture to celebrate life! We see this first happening in the *Book of Genesis* when, Melchizedek a "priest of God Most High" brought bread and wine to celebrate Abram's victory over his enemies (Genesis 14:18-19).

Bread and wine also became part of the Passover meal. Before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus and his disciples came together in the upper room to celebrate the Passover (Mark 14:12-20). This is what Christians call the "Last Supper." It's also what we Catholics call, the Holy Mass… (see, CCC 1333-1334)

Jesus does the same thing when he says *four times in a row,* unless you *eat my flesh* and *drink my blood* you will have *no life* in you!

In verse 51 of John 6, Jesus tells us, *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the* ***bread*** *which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."*

The *bread* that Jesus will give us at the Last Supper—*and at every Mass*—is his *Flesh*. How do we know this? Because Jesus said so!

Remember, Jesus is making himself the sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). According to the *Book of Leviticus* (Chapters 4-8), in order to partake in the ritual of having your sins forgiven, you have to eat what you sacrificed—and in this case, it's the *Lamb of God—Jesus!*

Jesus can't give us his own mortal body to eat because he will need it to rise from the dead to prove he truly is the Son of God. And also, eating his mortal body would be kind of gross... However, consuming his Body and Blood under the appearance of bread and wine is much more palatable!

Right now, may be asking yourself the same question the people who were following Jesus asked, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" The answer is, *transubstantiation*.

Transubstantiation: How something can look the same, yet be different...

Sacred Scripture reveals that Jesus had the power to alter matter.

When Jesus touched a person with leprosy, they were instantly healed (Mark 1:40-45). When Jesus was caught in a storm, he was able to calm the wind and sea (Luke 8:22-25). On a hillside in Capernaum, Jesus multiplied a few loaves and fish to feed over 5000 people (John 6:1-13). At the Wedding of Cana Jesus turned water into wine (John 2:1-5). And at the Last Supper, Jesus blessed bread and wine and changed them into his Body and Blood (Matthew 26:26-28).

What distinguishes the miracle at the *Last Supper* from the other miracles just mentioned is that people could *see* an immediate difference in what Jesus did. The person with leprosy saw their skin clear up, the Apostles saw the wind and sea calm down, the servants saw the water turn into wine, the thousands of people

on the mountain side saw a few loaves and fish turn into thousands of loaves and fish so everyone could eat their fill.

However, when the bread and wine are consecrated into the Body and Blood of Christ, the "bread" and "wine" still look the *same*. Did a miracle just happen to the "bread" and "wine" even though they still look the same? Yes, of course!

Remember, there are miracles we can see with our eyes, and there are miracles we can see with our *faith!*

For example, when a Centurion approached Jesus and asked him to heal his paralyzed servant, Jesus was willing to go to his home to do so. However, the Centurion had so much faith in Jesus' power that he said to him, "But only say the word, and my servant will be healed." Jesus marveled at his faith in him and then said, "Go, be it done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment. The Centurion didn't see that his servant was healed, but through his *faith* in Jesus, he knew what Jesus told him was true (Matthew 8:5-13)

In the same respect, at the Last Supper, when Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and then gives it to his Disciples and says, "Take, eat; this is my *body*" and then takes a cup of wine, gives thanks and then tells his disciples to, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my *blood*…" we trust what Jesus just told us is *true* just like when the Centurion trusted what Jesus told him was *true* (Matthew 26:26; 27).

Now of course, our human minds search for a logical explanation of *how* the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) explains how this is possible in his compendium, *Summa Theologiae.*

In Article 4 of Question #75, St. Thomas refers to the transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ as *transubstantiation.*[1]

Aquinas based his explanation of *transubstantiation* on the writings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.). *The Encyclopedia of Britannica* states that Aristotle was "one of the greatest intellectual figures of Western history."[2]

In his work, *Categories,* Aristotle tries to define what *substance* is. It's hard to describe what the "substance" of something is because it has to do with the invisible qualities of it. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* gives a very complicated explanation of what "substance" is. Here is the link if you care to take a crack at understanding it: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/substance/.

Turning bread into flesh? That's impossible!

At the *Wedding of Cana*, Jesus turned water into wine. At the *Last Supper,* Jesus turned bread and wine into his Body and Blood. He does the same thing at every Mass (see CCC 1413).

This all sounds impossible, right? Well, as Jesus said,

"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

To understand what *substance* is, we use examples of how we know something is real, even though it's difficult to explain *how* it is real. For example, if we talk about how *virtuous* a person is, we say they are a man or woman of "substance." And yet, you can not tell by looking at a person that they are *virtuous*. "Substance" has to do with the *being* of that person, the *essence* of that person. It's how they think and

1. New Advent, Third Part, question 75, retrieved 7/5/2021, https://www.newadvent.org/summa/4075.htm#article1.
2. Britannica, retrieved 7/5/2021, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle.

what they do that makes them *virtuous*. But you can't just look at them and tell whether they are *virtuous* or not.

We know what is going on inside a person is *real* because know what is going on inside of us is *real*; we just can't take a photograph of our *essence, being* or *substance*. And yet, we know our invisible, interior life is just as real as our exterior life.

We also know the *substance* of our interior life can change. A virtuous person can be lured into evil and become an unvirtuous person although they still look the same on the outside. Here are a few more examples to help understand what *substance* is, and how it can change:

Your house is your *home* until you sell it, then it becomes someone else's *home*. The walls are the same, the floors are the same, the windows are the same, the architectural design is the same, however, the meaning—the *substance*—of what your house was to you has changed. It is no longer your "home," it is someone else's *home*. The physical appearance is exactly the same as when you lived in it, but you can no longer call it your home since the ownership has changed.

A diamond ring is a piece of jewelry with a metal band and a rock on top of it. But when a man buys that piece of jewelry and gets on one knee and says to the woman he loves, "Will you marry me…" that piece of jewelry becomes a *diamond engagement ring*. The meaning—the *substance*—of the ring has changed forever! It now means: love, fidelity, children, to death do us part. Are these things real? Yes, of course! Can you see with your eyes they are real? No, you can't see them, but you know inside of you that these invisible realities are *real!*

Jesus deals in invisible realities too. We call these realities the *supernatural* and *spiritual* realm. St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "...we look not to the things that are *seen* but to the things that are *unseen*; for the things that are *seen* are transient, but the things that are *unseen* are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Jesus is always trying to lead us into that which is eternal. This is why he says during the *Bread of Life* discourse, *"It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the Words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life…"* (John 6:63).

The example of the *house* and *diamond engagement ring* help us to understand how transubstantiation is real. And yet, we cannot fully grasp how the Holy Spirit changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. This is why the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* state:

> *"The presence of the risen Christ in the Eucharist is an inexhaustible mystery that the Church can never fully explain in words. We must remember that the triune God is the creator of all that exists and has the power to do more than we can possibly imagine. As St. Ambrose said: 'If the word of the Lord Jesus is so powerful as to bring into existence things which were not, then a fortiori those things which already exist can be changed into something else'" (De Sacramentis, IV, 5-16)* [1]

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has this to say about Christ's mysterious presence in the Holy Eucharist:

> *We carry out this command of the Lord by celebrating the memorial of his sacrifice. In so doing, we offer to the Father what he has himself given us: the gifts of his creation, bread and wine which, by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ, have become the body and blood of Christ.*

1. USCCB.org, *The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions and Answers*, retrieved 4/10/2021, https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-real-presence-faqs

Christ is thus really and mysteriously made present. (CCC 1357, see also CCC 737, CCC 1380, 1402, 1405)

A man becomes a *husband* and a woman becomes a *wife* after they are married, but they still look the same. After they have children, the husband becomes a *father*, and the wife becomes a *mother*. Another change has occurred in them, but they still look the same...

Remember, we do not need to completely comprehend *how* the Real Presence of Christ exists in the Holy Eucharist, we can trust that because Jesus told us we are eating his Body and Blood that *he knows* what he is talking about even if we do not! This is why the *Catechism* also states:

The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation" (Council of Trent 1551, CCC 1376, see also CCC 1413)

In John 6, Jesus tells us that the bread he will give us one day will be his *flesh* (v.51).

Jesus doesn't say, "The bread I will give you one day will be a *symbol* of my flesh." He tells us it will *be* his flesh and that we must "eat his flesh" and "drink his blood" if we are to have his life in us...

Only a Priest in the Catholic Church can transubstantiate the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ...

Many Christian denominations do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. They believe the bread and wine Jesus gave his Disciples to eat at the Last Supper were just a *symbol* of his body and blood. And even if they do believe they are consuming the body and blood of Christ, the Catholic Church states that only that bread and wine which has been transubstantiated by one of Christ's ordained priests in the Apostolic succession of the Catholic Church contains the true Body and Blood of Christ:

> *It is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice. (CCC 1410)*
>
> *Only validly ordained priests can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and the wine so that they become the Body and Blood of the Lord. (CCC 1411, see also, "in persona christi capitis" CCC 1348, 1375)*

"This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"

> *59 This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. 60 Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "**This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?**" 61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "**Do you take offense at this**? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? 63 It is the **spirit that gives life**, the **flesh is of no avail**; the words that I have spoken to you are **spirit** and **life**. 64 But there are some of you that **do not believe**." For Jesus knew from the first who those*

> *were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. 65 And he said, "This is why I told you that* ***no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father****." 66 After this* ***many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him****. (John 6:59-66)*

The fact that many of his disciples *drew back and no longer went about with him* is evidence they did not think Jesus was using *figurative* or *symbolic* language when he told them they must "eat his flesh" and "drink his blood."

For example, in Chapter 15 of John, Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (v.5).

After Jesus said this, none of his disciples drew back from him like they do in John 6. The knew Jesus was using a metaphor. They didn't say, "This man is insane! He thinks he is a vine and we are branches!"

In verse 60, the followers of Jesus say, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" Again, this demonstrates how they knew Jesus was serious about what he said. This is why Jesus said in return, "Do you take offense to this?" (v.61).

It's obvious those listening to Jesus took him *literally* because of their reaction to what he said. People are not offended when they hear someone use symbolic or figurative language. Jesus said what he meant, and meant what he said! The final proof of this is when many of his followers decided to walk away from him.

The question is... why were they so offended?

Many people today think the reason why Jesus' followers took offense at what he said is because the idea of eating flesh

and drinking blood is *gross*. But this would not have been the reason why the Jews who were following Jesus were offended. They were offended because God told Moses in Chapter 17 of the *Book of Leviticus* that the people should *not* drink blood:

> *"If any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood." (Leviticus 17:10-12)*

As you just read, *blood* was believed to be the "life-force" of an animal (*"for the life of the flesh is in the blood"*). This made sense to them at the time because if you drain the blood from any animal it dies.

Blood was also used for the *atonement* of sins. It was to be sprinkled *on* the altar of sacrifice and *on* the people, *not drank* (see, Exodus 24:6; Leviticus 1:5; 3:2; 5:9; 7:2, 8:19 *blood sprinkled on altar*, see, Exodus 24:8; Leviticus 8:30, *blood sprinkled on people*). Therefore, the Jewish people were prohibited from consuming blood because it was *sacred* and used for the forgiveness of sins.

However... what God forbid in the *Old Testament*, He now commands us to do in the *New Testament!* Jesus tells us four times in a row we must *eat his flesh* and *drink his blood*—his *life force*—or we will have *"no life"* in us (see, John 6:53-58).

Jesus also wants us to consume his Flesh and Blood because he has made himself the Sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). In the *Old Testament*, in order to complete the ritual of offering God a sacrifice, you had to eat

what you sacrificed (see Chapter 12 of the *Book of Exodus*, and Chapters 4, 6, and 7 of the *Book of Leviticus*). This is why at the Last Supper Jesus took bread blessed, and broke it, and then gave it to his disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." He then took a cup of wine, gave thanks to God the Father again, and then gave it to his disciples and said, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the *forgiveness of sins*" (Matthew 26:26-28, see also, CCC 1393).

At every Mass, Jesus invites us to dine with him. What's on the menu? *Jesus is!* It's also interesting to note that Jesus is not only the sacrifice that we are to consume at this meal, he is also the High-Priest who offers himself as a sacrifice to God the Father (see side bar).

There is only one Priest, the High-Priest, Jesus Christ!

What makes Jesus' sin-offering so unique is that he is not only offering himself as the lamb for the forgiveness of our Sins, he is the High-Priest making the offering to God the Father! According to Sacred Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the "one mediator between God and men." (1st Timothy 2:5)... by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified," (Hebrews 10:14) that is, by the unique sacrifice of the cross. (CCC 1544)

The redemptive sacrifice of Christ is unique, accomplished once for all; yet it is made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. The same is true of the one priesthood of Christ; it is made present through the ministerial priesthood without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood: "Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers." (St. Thomas Aquinas, in He c. 7, l. 4, (CCC 1545)

Bible scholars speculate that the Last Supper happened about a year after Jesus had told his followers in Capernaum that they must *eat his flesh* and *drink his blood*. His followers did not understand that Jesus was planning to offer himself as a sin-offering to God the Father for the forgiveness of our sins. If they had known this, it would have made more sense to them why Jesus was telling them in Capernaum the day would come when they would have to partake of the ritual of having their sins forgiven by consuming the sacrifice he was offering to God the Father—*himself!*

Because Jesus made himself the one-time sacrifice for our sins, we don't have to purchase a lamb, take it to the priest and have him slaughter it for the forgiveness of our sins; we simply ask Christ for his mercy and forgiveness and then consume his Real Presence to purify us from our sins. And according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Grace we receive from the Holy Eucharist also gives us the strength and inner-contentment to resist temptation going forward (see, CCC 1392-1394).

God knows, that as we strive every day to avoid sin, there will be those days when we will fall short of the glory of God. This is why Christ offers his Body and Blood to us under the appearance of bread and wine at the daily Mass. In this way, he "give us this day our daily bread" so we can be continually cleansed from our sins.

However, it is important to note, that according to Church teachings, the Holy Eucharist cleanses us from

Did you know...

The Holy Catholic Mass is celebrated every day of the year (except for Good Friday and Holy Saturday)? This is so Jesus can give us "each day our daily Bread." He's talking about giving us himself as the Bread of Life! (see, CCC 2837, 2861)

our *venial sins* (see, CCC 1393-1395) not our *mortal sins*. For us to be cleansed from our *mortal sins* we must receive the *Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Confession)* (see, CCC 1855-1857). Jesus instituted this Sacrament in Chapter 20 of John's record of the Gospel (vs. 19-23). For more information about this teaching, please go to page 64: *"The Holy Eucharist cleanses us of our venial sins; the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation cleanses us of our mortal sins…"*

The "blood of the grape…"

In the *Old Testament*, wine is referred to as "the blood of the grape." Although it is used as a metaphor for wine, we know Jesus meant it literally when he blessed wine and commanded us to "drink his blood" (John 6:53; 54; 55; 56).

*"Curds from the herd, and milk from the flock, with fat of lambs and rams, herds of Bashan and goats, with the finest of the wheat—and of the **blood of the grape** you drank wine" (Deuteronomy 32:14, also, Genesis 49:10-11).*

"It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins…"

Chapter 10 of the *Letter to the Hebrews* makes it clear that the shedding of the blood of animals cannot take away our sins, but the Blood of Christ *can*—for only God can take away our sins:

> *For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure… He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when*

Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." (Hebrews 10:4-6; 10-14, see also, CCC 599-623; CCC 1359-1367)

Jesus paid the debt for our sins when he made himself a one-time sacrifice to God the Father. As Isaiah prophesized about Jesus:

"...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." (Isaiah 53:5-7)

Despite the millions of animals that were sacrificed in the *Old Testament* for the forgiveness of sins, they did not accomplish what the one-time sacrifice of Christ did for all those living before, during and after Jesus. His sacrifice was the perfect sacrifice to God the Father thus abolishing the need for any more sacrifices. This is why the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the "one mediator between God and men." The Christian tradition considers Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High," as a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ, the unique "high priest after the order of Melchizedek"; "holy, blameless, unstained," "by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified," that is, by the unique sacrifice of the cross. (CCC 1544)

"It is the spirit that gives life..."

In an attempt to help his followers understand that the bread and wine he will feed us one day will *truly, truly* contain his Spiritual Presence, Jesus says to those following him, *"It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life"* (v.63).

Sacred Scripture tells us that the Word of God is "living and active" (John 1:14; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Thessalonians).

When Jesus tells us the words that he speaks are *"spirit and life,"* he is not just saying the words he is speaking contain the Spirit and Life of God, he is also saying the words he is speaking contain *instructions* for us to receive his Spirit and Life by consuming his Body and Blood.

In fact, just before he begins the *Bread of Life Discourse*, Jesus makes a distinction between us searching the scriptures to find eternal life *in* them, and us coming directly to him to receive eternal life *from* him—Jesus says:

> *"You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me, yet you refuse to come to **me** that you may **have** life..." (John 5:39-40)*

At first, it sounds as though Jesus is saying the Word of God does not contain the Spirit and Life of God in them. But that's not what he's saying.

Jesus want us to know the Word of God will direct us to him so we can learn about him and accept him our Lord and Savior. However, it is he himself who will give us eternal life in him—as when we stand in the Communion line to receive his Body and Blood! It is through his Divine Life living in us through his

Word *and* Sacraments that our mind, body and soul will continually be purified until we become holy just as he is holy (Leviticus 11:45; Matthew 5:48).

We all know our body will break down and die one day either from old age, disease or an accident. This is why Jesus is more interested in keeping our *soul* alive! He will give us a new *glorified body* at the Resurrection of the Dead (see, CCC 997-999, Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Philippians 3:21).

"...the flesh is of no avail."

It's now time to make a distinction about what Jesus meant when he said, *"It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail..."* (v.63).

Jesus is not referring to his own *Flesh* being of *no avail* (*no use)*, he is talking about our flesh—our *mortal bodies*—being of *no use*. However, *his Flesh*—which contains his Real Presence—is *of use* because it bestows his Spirit and Life in us!

In order to accentuate how vitally important it is for us to obey Christ's commands for us to eat his flesh and drink his blood, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us:

> *The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life." "The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch..." (CCC 1324)*

The leader of every major religion in the world—be it Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism or Islam—taught that their followers must live a certain way in order to go to heaven. Jesus taught us that we must live *through him*, *with him* and *in him* if we are to go to heaven (see, Romans 11:36; CCC 1 and CCC 1368).

As St. Augustine once said, *"If we receive the Eucharist worthily, we become what we receive..."* (Easter sermon, 227).

"There are some of you that do not believe..."

After Jesus tells his followers they must "eat his flesh" and "drink his blood" or they will have "no life" in them, he notices how shocked they are by what he just said. This is why he says, "But there are some of you that do not believe… This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father" (John 6:6-65).

What is *granted to us by the Father*? The answer is… *faith! Faith* is a gift from God that He offers everyone who is seeking Him. Jesus says in Ch. 7 of Matthew's record of the Gospel, *"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened"* (Matthew 7:7-8).

"Do this in remembrance of me…" (Luke 22:19)

In ancient times, the phrase, "Do this in remembrance of me" did not mean to simply remember what had happened in the past, but to actually repeat what had happened in the past. Dr. Scott Hahn explains this in his book, *Consuming the Word* (May 28, 2013):

"What the first Christians knew as the 'New Testament' was not a book, but the Eucharist. At a solemn sacrificial banquet, Jesus made an offering of his 'body' and 'blood.' He used traditional sacrificial language. He spoke of the action as his memorial. He told those who attended to repeat the action they had witnessed: 'Do this in remembrance of me' (Luke 22:19). Thus he instituted the Christian priesthood and established the Church's liturgy. He authorized clergy to do what he was doing: to make a memorial offering of his body and blood. He called his action the 'new covenant in my blood.'" (See also, CCC 1348, 1357, 1360, and The Lamb's Supper, by Dr. Scott Hahn).

If we give God just a little bit of faith (*even faith the size of a mustard seed*) God will reveal Himself to us more and more until our faith in Him is strong enough to move mountains (see, Matthew 17:20b). And the biggest "mountain" that we have in our life is death! This is why Jesus wants to take away our fear of death by offering his Divine Life to us through his Word and Sacraments...

"After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him…"

It's interesting that the *chapter* and *verse* where people doubt what Jesus has told us is 6:66. This is the same number the *Book of Revelation* tells us is the "number of the beast" who "deceives those who dwell on earth" (13:11-18).

The doubt that entered the minds and hearts of those who drew back from Christ did not come from our Lord and Savior; it came from the Evil One—*the Beast!* If we ever doubt what Jesus has told us, it is because the Devil is trying to deceive us from receiving the fullness of Christ in both his Word and Sacraments. Always remember what Jesus told us about the Devil:

> *"He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But, because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God..." (John 8:44b-47)*

Also remember what our Lord tells us in John 6: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life…"* (vs.47-48)

"Do you also wish to go away?"

> *67 Jesus said to the Twelve, "**Do you also wish to go away**?"*
> *68 Simon Peter answered him, "**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life**; 69 **and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God**." (John 6:67-69)*

After Jesus told his followers they must *eat his flesh* and *drink his blood*, many of them walked away from him (v.66). Jesus then turned to the Twelve Apostles and said to them, "Do you also wish to go away?" (v.67).

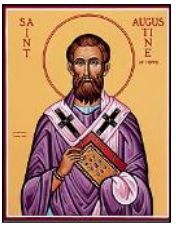
Jesus just gave us another clue as to how serious he is that the "bread" and "wine" he will give us at the Last Supper will actually be his *Body* and *Blood*. He is willing to disperse his original Twelve Apostles and start all over again with a new group who actually have faith in what he is telling them.

Fortunately, Simon Peter—*who probably didn't have a clue what Jesus was talking about at that moment*—offers the correct response when he says:

> *"Lord, to whom shall we go? **You have the words of eternal life**; 69 and we have **believed**, and have **come to know**, that you are **the Holy One of God**." (John 6:68-69)*

Peter realizes that even though what Jesus just commanded them to do seems outrageous, he also realizes *who* just spoke those words—the Son of God! Congratulations, Peter! You are now walking by faith, not by human reasoning!

"If you believe what you like in the Gospel, and reject what you don't like, it is not the Gospel you believe in, but yourself…"



-St. Augustine of Hippo (b.354 AD, d.430)

When it comes to believing in the *Real Presence* of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, we—like St. Peter—must take a "leap of faith" and trust that Jesus knows what he is talking about even if we do not.

Remember, Jesus is the only one in the history of the world who ever predicted his death and then rose from it, thus proving he is exactly who he claimed to be—God on earth! Jesus would never lie to us, nor deceive us; he came to save us, not confuse us.

And all the people said, "Amen!" *(1st Chronicles 16:36)*

After receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, Catholics profess their belief in the Real Presence of Christ by saying, "Amen!" The word "Amen" is a Hebrew word which means, "I believe" and "I affirm!"

We walk by faith, not by sight... The conclusion of the *Bread of Life* discourse

When it comes to believing in the *Real Presence* of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, many people want scientific evidence that the bread and wine have changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. They think the chemical elements of the bread and wine must undergo a change in order to prove they have become the Flesh of Christ. However, the change that occurs in the bread and wine is an *ontological* change; a change not seen by the eye.[1] *Ontology* is a branch of the philosophical sciences that studies the concepts of existence, being, becoming and reality.

It is through the spoken word and authority of Christ that a real change takes place to the *substance* of the bread and wine at the

1. Christ's Presence in the Eucharist; True, Real and Substantial, by Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ, retrieved 4/29/2021, https://adoremus.org/2005/04/christs-presence-in-the-eucharist/

Last Supper and at every Mass (see, Matthew 26:26-28, also CCC 1375; 1381).

When we combine the words of our Lord at the Last Supper with the words he spoke in Capernaum a year earlier in the *Bread of Life Discourse* we see the connection of why Jesus gives us himself as the "Bread of Life" at the Last Supper.

We also see a connection between Jesus offering himself as the Sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sins of the world and how you had to complete the sacrifice of the *sin offering* and *thanksgiving offering* by consuming what you offered to God.

All scripture considered—and considering who is speaking to us in scripture—we can safely draw the conclusion that Jesus said what he meant, and meant what he said. And if we have a hard time understanding or believing what he said and meant, then this is one of those times as a Christian that we must "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7)...

The chalices and ciborium's used to hold the Body and Blood of our Lord are made of finest metals because our Lord deserves the very best that God has given us...

More information about why Jesus commanded us to eat his Flesh and drink his Blood...

Up to now, we have touched upon four major reasons why Jesus gave us his Body and Blood to eat. As a reminder, they are:

1. So we could be nourished and sustained with his Divine Life.

2. So we could be continually purified from our sins with his Divine Life until we are "divinized" in him.

3. So we could partake in the ritual Jesus began when he allowed himself to be the Sacrificial Lamb for the forgiveness of our sins. In order to be cleansed of our sins, we have to "eat the lamb."

4. So all of his followers could be one body (community) in Christ.

Let us now explore these reasons more deeply...

"Give us this day our daily Bread..."

In the one and only prayer that Jesus teaches us, he tells us to ask God the Father to, *"...give us this day our daily bread"* (Matthew 6:11).

Why would Jesus tell us in John 6:35 that he is the "*bread of life"* and then teach us to pray for *sandwich bread* from God the Father? This doesn't make sense...

What does make sense is if Jesus is telling us to pray to our Father to give us *himself* as our Daily Bread! This is why Paragraph 2837 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

"Daily" (epiousios) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament… Taken in the qualitative sense, it signifies what is necessary for life, and more broadly every good thing sufficient for subsistence. Taken literally (epi-ousios: "super-essential"), it refers directly to the Bread of Life, the Body of Christ, the "medicine of immortality," without which we have no life within us. Finally in this connection, its heavenly meaning is evident: "this day" is the Day of the Lord, the day of the feast of the kingdom, anticipated in the Eucharist that is already the foretaste of the kingdom to come. For this reason it is fitting for the Eucharistic liturgy to be celebrated each day. (see also, CCC 2861)

The Eucharist is our daily bread. The power belonging to this divine food makes it a bond of union. Its effect is then understood as unity, so that, gathered into his Body and made members of him, we may become what we receive... This also is our daily bread: the readings you hear each day in church and the hymns you hear and sing. All these are necessities for our pilgrimage. (131, St. Augustine, Sermo 57, 7: PL 38, 389, John 6:53-56).

The Father in heaven urges us, as children of heaven, to ask for the bread of heaven. (Christ) himself is the bread who, sown in the Virgin, raised up in the flesh, kneaded in the Passion, baked in the oven of the tomb, reserved in churches, brought to altars, furnishes the faithful each day with food from heaven. (CCC 2837, 132, 132 St. Peter Chrysologus, Sermo 67 PL 52, 392; John 6:51)

St. Cyprian (circa 210 - 258) is one of many Church Fathers who understood Jesus was referring to *himself* when he taught us to pray to God the Father for "*our daily Bread*:"

As the Lord's Prayer continues, we ask: "Give us this day our daily bread." We can understand this petition in a spiritual and in a literal sense. For in the divine plan both senses may help toward our salvation. For Christ is the bread of life; this bread does not belong to everyone, but is ours alone. When we say, our Father, we understand that he is the father of those who know him and believe in him. In the same way we speak of our daily bread, because Christ is the bread of those who touch his body.

Now, we who live in Christ and receive his Eucharist, the food of salvation, ask for this bread to be given us every day. Otherwise we may be forced to abstain from this communion because of some serious sin. In this way we shall be separated from the body of Christ, as he taught us in the words: I am the bread of life which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats my bread will live for ever and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. Christ is saying, then, that anyone who eats his bread will live for ever. Clearly they possess life who approach his body and share in the Eucharistic communion. For this reason we should be apprehensive and pray that no one has to abstain from this communion, lest he be separated from the body of Christ and be far from salvation. Christ has warned of this: If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood you will have no life in you. We pray for our daily bread, Christ, to be given to us. With his help, we who live and abide in him will never be separated from his body and his grace. (St. Cyprian, Treatise on the Lord's Prayer, Chapter 18.)

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul makes is clear that he believes in the Real Presence of Christ: *"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord." (1 Cor. 11:27)*

St. Cyprian wasn't alone in believing in the Real Presence of Christ. Please follow

this link to read what many other Church Fathers and early theologians said about the Real Presence: https://www.fisheaters.com/fathersoneucharist.html.

St. John wants us to know that Jesus is *God* and Jesus is *life*, and that Christ's life must live in us if we are to live with him for all eternity...

Bible scholars refer to Matthew, Mark and Luke's record of Jesus' life and teachings as the *synoptic gospels*. This means the information about Christ is very similar in each of them and, in some instances, contain the exact same wording.

However, John's record of the Gospel highlights several attributes of Christ that the synoptic gospels only touch upon. John wants his readers to know that Jesus is truly Divine, and that his Divinity must live and grow in us if we are to live with Christ for all eternity. In fact, John begins his record of the Gospel by saying:

> *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was **life**, and the **life** was the light of men." (John 1:1-4)*

Before the Son of God walked among us, God spoke to us through prophets. That's why we *heard* the Word of God but did not *see* God until the incarnation of Christ. This is why John will go on to say:

> *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." (John 1:14)*

All other religious leaders the world has ever known pointed to heaven and then tried to tell us how to get there. Jesus is the only one who came down from heaven to show us the way back to heaven. And when he showed us how to get to heaven, he didn't point to the sky, he pointed to himself!

> *"No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man. (John 3:3)*
>
> *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him." (John 14:6-7)*
>
> *"The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one…" (John 17:22-23)*

St. John understood what Jesus was trying to get us to understand about our salvation in Christ. John was one of the original Twelve Apostles of Jesus. He spent all three years with Christ during his ministry and was an eye-witness to his teachings, miracles, crucifixion and resurrection (see, Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 3:17; John 19:25-27; John 21:2).

Bible scholars also believe John was the last to write his record of the Gospel around the year 96 AD (see, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08438a.htm#IV). It is obvious by what John chose to write about Christ that he was convinced Jesus was truly the Son of God. He not only begins his record of Christ's life by saying this, he states the same thing at the end:

> *"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30)*

St. John not only emphasizes Jesus' Divinity, he also emphasizes that it is by *believing* in Christ that we have *life* in his name. "Believing" means *doing!* You can say that you *believe* in exercise, but if you never *do* it you wont' benefit from it. The same goes with our salvation in Christ. It's not enough to say we *believe* in Christ, we must *do* what he commanded us to do in order to be saved. Jesus makes this clear when he says:

"O God, thou art my God, I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee..." (Psalms 63:1)

> *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments... He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." (John 14:15; 21)*

One of the things Jesus wants us to do is invite his Divine Life to live in us. "Grace" is the indwelling presence of God in our mind and soul. It is through God's Grace that we are able to become holy, just as He is holy (Matthew 5:49; 1 Peter 1:16; Leviticus 11:44).

Jesus offers his Grace to us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is alive in His Word and Sacraments. Consuming God's Word is how we cleanse our minds from the lies and deceit of society (Proverbs 7:1-3, Jeremiah 15:16). Consuming the Sacraments of God is how we have the strength to live according to God's Word and Wisdom (1 John 4:4; Philippians 4:12-13). Both are a "one-two" punch against the Devil!

St. John highlights many teachings from Christ that emphasize the need to have Christ's Grace live in us so we can live with him for all eternity. Here are a few examples:

Jesus refers to his Holy Spirit as "living water" and invites us to drink from him:

> *Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life..." (John 4:13-14)*

Later on in Chapter 7 of John, Jesus once again refers to himself as "living water." Jesus says this while teaching in the Temple during the *Feast of Tabernacles*:

> *"On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, `Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified... (John 7:37-39)*

Jesus wants us to know that just as we continually feed our mortal body to keep us alive, we must also feed our supernatural body (our soul) to keep us alive in him! This is why he also says in John's record of the Gospel:

> *"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. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me..." (John 6:53-57)*

In Chapter 14 of John, Jesus begins to prepare us for his departure from this world. However, he wants us to know that if we keep his commandments (*all of them, not just the ones we*

pick and choose) he will never be far from us. In fact, he will actually be living in us!

> *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you.*
> *"I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.." (John 14:15-20)*

St. Cyril believed in the Real Presence of Christ...

"Christ said indicating (the bread and wine): 'This is My Body,' and "This is My Blood," in order that you might not judge what you see to be a mere figure. The offerings, by the hidden power of God Almighty, are changed into Christ's Body and Blood, and by receiving these we come to share in the life-giving and sanctifying efficacy of Christ."

-St. Cyril of Alexandria
Commentary on Matthew 26, 27

In Chapter 15 of John's Gospel, Jesus uses the metaphor of him being a "Vine" and us being the "branches" in order to help us understand how we need his Divine Grace living and growing in us if we are to become like him in all ways:

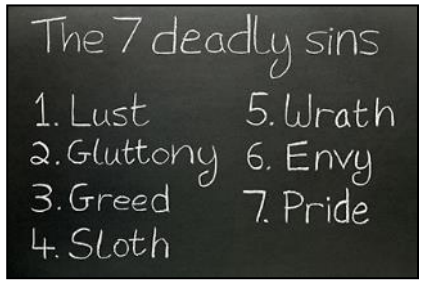
> *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing..." (John 15:4-5)*

Just as a vine supplies nutrients to the branches so they can grow and bear fruit, we too must receive the "nutrients" of God's Grace if we are to grow more and more into His image

and likeness. And as Jesus declares, without us *abiding* in him, we can do *nothing* compared to what he can do for us if we allow his Grace to work in us to overcome our human weaknesses.

Quite often, our ego and pride get in the way of us becoming fully formed in Christ. Instead of listening and doing everything Christ has taught us to do, we usually only do some of the things Christ taught us to do. Why? Because it's really hard to love our enemies, do good to those who persecute us and forgive everyone "seventy times seven." By the way, "seven" is considered the number of *perfection* in the Bible. Jesus wants us to forgive others each and every time so we can free ourselves of our anger and resentment towards them.

When we turn to our Lord and ask him to help us do what we cannot do for ourselves, that's when we really begin to feel the Grace of Christ at work in us. It's then we begin to feel his joy, peace and love living and growing in us day by day.



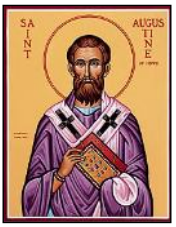
The Bible reveals to us that there are Seven Deadly sins. They are *pride*, *greed*, *wrath*, *envy*, *lust*, *gluttony* and *sloth* (CCC 1866). Every human being must overcome these vices in order to become a citizen of heaven one day. This is why we need the indwelling presence of Christ to help us "reverse the curse" of our fallen human nature.

For every vice of our fallen nature, Christ wants to instill his virtue in us. For *pride* there is *humility*; for envy there is *contentment*; for wrath there is *mercy*; for gluttony there is *moderation*; for *lust* there is *chastity*; for sloth there is *sacrifice*; and for *greed* there is *generosity*. Without the Grace of Christ, we can do *nothing* to overcome all of these vices on

our own. That's why we all need a savior. That's why we all need Christ! As the Book of Proverbs says:

> *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones… (Proverbs 3:5-8)*

St. Augustine believed in the Real Presence of 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."

-St. Augustine of Hippo, Sermons 227, 21, circa 415AD

The more we rely on Christ's Grace to help us live according to all of his teachings, the more we will begin to understand the heart and mind of Christ and the lasting joy, peace and love that he has waiting for us…

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection you have set us free…

During his ministry, Christ gave us four Sacraments to partake in for the forgiveness of our sins. They are:

1) *Baptism* (Mark 16:15-17; Matthew 28:18-20, CCC 1213-1216)
2) *Holy Communion* (Matthew 26:26-28, (CCC 1324-1396)
3) *Penance and Reconciliation* (Confession) (John 20:21-23, (CCC 1422-1449) and,
4) *Anointing of the Sick* (Mark 6:7-13; James 5:14-16, (CCC 1499-1525)

In each of these Sacraments, we receive the cleansing and healing Grace of Christ through the Holy Spirit. This is why the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us:

> *The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation. "Sacramental grace" is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior. (CCC 1129)*

"... there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Saint Peter, Acts 4:12)

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God's wisdom and authority in the Garden of Eden, chaos and disorder entered into the human race (Genesis 3:1-24, CCC 399-400). We see their son Cain killing his brother Abel and an expansion of the Seven Deadly Sins (Genesis 4:8; CCC 1865-1867). The first humans fell from God's Grace because the Devil wanted them to believe they could be their own gods without the help of God the Father.

Adam and Eve failed to realize they were already made in the *image* and *likeness* of God when He gave them a rationale soul to know, love and learn from Him. In due time, God—*like a good Parent*—would teach His children everything they needed to know about Him and the world around them. But Adam and Eve were lured away from God through the promptings of the Devil who likes nothing more than to get back at God by hurting His Children.

Immediately after the fall of humanity, God began to plan a rescue mission to save us from ourselves. Part of this mission

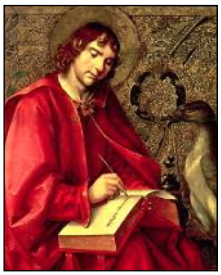
was to one day walk among us and teach us His commands (see, John 6:45, Isaiah 54:13; Genesis 3:15; Leviticus 26:12; Isaiah 35:1-6; Ezekiel 34:11-16).

God accomplished this mission through His Son, Jesus who came into this world to show us *step-by-step* how to become the best person possible—a person just like himself!

The mission of Christ is the same today as it was 2000 years ago—to cleanse and purify our heart, mind and soul from the ways of the world by teaching us the ways of God. If you believe in our all-knowing God, then you must also believe He knows better than us what is best for us.

Let Christ abide in you...

In St. John's 1st Letter he implores us to abide in Christ so Christ can abide in us!



"Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he has promised us, eternal life. I write this to you about those who would deceive you; but the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming." (1 John 2:24:28)

Living our lives according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is what is *best for us!* In fact, if everyone in the entire world did what Jesus taught us to do, there would be world peace. Anyone who really pays attention to what Christ is trying to teach us knows this to be 1000% true!

But Jesus doesn't just say, "I command you to do this or that" like a good friend, Jesus says, "Let me *help* you do that." This is why Christ offers us himself—his Sanctifying Grace, the indwelling presence of Christ that we receive through the Holy

Spirit to help us to do what we cannot do for ourselves—become holy! The day we make Jesus the complete authority in our life—*and in every area of our life*—that is the day we will truly begin to understand the heart and mind of Christ. This is why Jesus tells us:

> *"In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." (John 14:20-21)*

The only thing that can deplete the Grace of God living and growing in us is *sin*. That's why Jesus continually cleanses us of our sins through the Sacraments Holy Communion and Confession.

The difference between *venial* and *mortal sin*...

Let's face it, none of us like it when someone sins against us, and we don't like ourselves when we sin against others. Sin introduces tension and disharmony in our soul, and thus in our relationships.

The tension and disharmony we feel in our mind and soul is our *conscience* letting us know that we have sinned against God and each other. Sin separates us from God just as sin separates us from each other. God has given us the *Sacrament of Holy Communion* and the *Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance* to remove sin from our soul along with the shame and regret that comes with it. This includes our *venial sins* and our *mortal sins*. What's the difference between the two? *Mortal sin* causes more damage to our soul and our relationships.

Here is an example of a *venial sin*... Your boss finally invites you over for dinner. When you arrive, your boss tells you that their spouse spent all day in the kitchen preparing dinner.

You sit down to eat and after you take your first bite the boss's spouse anxiously asks, "What do you think!?"

You pause for a moment and think to yourself, "Wow, this is really awful! There's too much salt in it. I feel like spitting it out." But instead you say, "Oh! Wow! This is really good! It's like nothing I ever tasted before. Delicious!"

You just told a lie... Are you going to hell because you broke the 8th Commandment? St. John the Evangelist says, "No" because there is sin that is "not deadly:"

A Sinner's Prayer...

"O God, I am a sinner. I am sorry for my sins. I want to turn away from sin, but I am weak. I need Jesus and the Holy Spirit to help me...

Jesus, from this moment on, I accept you as my Lord and Savior. I want to follow you and serve God the Father in the fellowship of your Church. I want to receive your Holy Spirit so my love for you will grow. Being filled with your love instead of sin is how I will purify my soul. I ask this in your name, Jesus. Amen."

> *If anyone sees his brother sinning, if the sin is not deadly, he should pray to God and he will give him life. This is only for those whose sin is not deadly. There is such a thing as deadly sin, about which I do not say that you should pray. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not deadly. (1 John 5:16-17, NAB)*

John makes it clear that "all sin is wrongdoing." However, he makes a *distinction* between sin that is "deadly" and sin that is "not deadly." This is why the Catholic Church defines two kinds of sin—that which greatly depletes the Grace of Christ in us (*mortal*) and that which does not (*venial*):

> *Sins are rightly evaluated according to their gravity. The distinction between mortal and venial sin, already evident in Scripture, became part of the tradition of the Church. It is corroborated by human experience. (CCC 1854)*

Here's what the *Catechism* has to say about *mortal sin*:

Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him. Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it. (CCC 1855)

Mortal sin, by attacking the vital principle within us - that is, charity - necessitates a new initiative of God's mercy and a conversion of heart which is normally accomplished within the setting of the sacrament of reconciliation: (CCC 1856)

For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must together be met: "Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent." (CCC 1857)

Grave matter is specified by the Ten Commandments, corresponding to the answer of Jesus to the rich young man: "Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and your mother." The gravity of sins is more or less great: murder is graver than theft. One must also take into account who is wronged: violence against parents is in itself graver than violence against a stranger. (CCC 1858)

Mortal sin requires full knowledge and complete consent. It presupposes knowledge of the sinful character of the act, of its opposition to God's law. It also implies a consent sufficiently deliberate to be a personal choice. Feigned ignorance and hardness of heart do not diminish, but rather increase, the voluntary character of a sin. (CCC 1859)

Unintentional ignorance can diminish or even remove the imputability of a grave offense. But no one is deemed to be ignorant of the principles of the moral law, which are written in the conscience of every man. The promptings of feelings and passions can also diminish the voluntary and free character of the

offense, as can external pressures or pathological disorders. Sin committed through malice, by deliberate choice of evil, is the gravest. (CCC 1860)

Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself. It results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace. ***If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell****, for our freedom has the power to make choices for ever, with no turning back. However, although we can judge that an act is in itself a grave offense, we must entrust judgment of persons to the justice and mercy of God. (CCC 1861)*

Here's what the *Catechism* has to say about *venial sin*:

One commits venial sin when, in a less serious matter, he does not observe the standard prescribed by the moral law, or when he disobeys the moral law in a grave matter, but without full knowledge or without complete consent. (CCC 1862)

Venial sin weakens charity; it manifests a disordered affection for created goods; it impedes the soul's progress in the exercise of the virtues and the practice of the moral good; it merits temporal punishment. Deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin. However venial sin does not break the covenant with God. With God's grace it is humanly reparable. "Venial sin does not deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace, friendship with God, charity, and consequently eternal happiness."

While he is in the flesh, man cannot help but have at least some light sins. But do not despise these sins which we call "light":

if you take them for light when you weigh them, tremble when you count them. A number of light objects makes a great mass; a number of drops fills a river; a number of grains makes a heap. What then is our hope? Above all, confession. (CCC 1863)

"Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven." (Mt 12,31) There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit. Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss. (CCC 1864)

The Holy Eucharist cleanses us of our *venial sins*; the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation cleanses us of our *mortal sins*...

Through the Prophet Jeremiah, God prophesized He would one day establish a *new covenant* with His People (Jeremiah 31:31-34). God's Son is the fulfilment of this new covenant (CCC 73; CCC 611-613; CCC 762; CCC 781; CCC 1091).

At the Last Supper, Jesus reveals to us that consuming his Body and Blood is part of this new covenant for the forgiveness of our sins:

> *"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins..." (Matthew 26:26-28)*

Jesus not only pours out his blood under the appearance of wine at the Last Supper, he also pours out his blood during his Passion and Crucifixion. And Jesus makes it clear that the blood he is pouring out is for *the forgiveness of our sins*.

We know that ordinary bread and wine cannot take away our sins; only God can take away our sins. If the bread and wine Jesus gives us to eat and drink did not contain his Real Presence, then how could plain bread and wine be the catalyst for the forgiveness of our sins? This is part of the evidence of how we know Jesus is truly present in the consecrated Bread and Wine which have been transubstantiated into his Body and Blood (see CCC 1393-1394; 1416; 1846).

Jesus is fully present in the Body or Blood of Christ...

The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ. (CCC 1377, Cf. Council of Trent)

Here's another clue to help us understand that the consecrated Bread and Wine Jesus gives us to eat and drink is truly his Body and Blood. In the *Letter to the Hebrews* we read, "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22, see also, Leviticus 4:1-35; 17:11).

At the Last Supper, Jesus begins to prepare himself to be a sin-offering for the forgiveness of our sins. He is also the Passover Lamb who will be offered to God the Father as a ransom for our sins (CCC 606-608). This is why John the Baptist proclaims Jesus as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). During his Passion, Jesus will shed his blood for the forgiveness of our sins just as the Jewish Law prescribed.

Now here is something that many people do not know... According to Chapter 6 of the *Book of Leviticus*, in order to complete the ritual of having your sins forgiven, you have to *eat* what is offered to God:

> *The LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron and his sons, This is the law of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the LORD; it is most holy. The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it; in a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tent of meeting..."*
> *(Leviticus 6:24-26)*

Remember, according to our Catholic Theology, all who are baptized into the Christian Faith share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ (CCC 1268, see also 1 Peter 2:5-10). Although the Church's ordained Priest are the only ones allowed to act *in persona Christi capitis* (see CCC 1348), all baptized Catholics are allowed to consume the sin-offering which is our Lord.

At every Mass, Jesus gives us his Body and Blood to eat for the *forgiveness of our sins* (Matthew 26:28). However, it's important to note it is our *venial sins* that are cleansed from our soul when we receive the Holy Eucharist, not our *mortal sins*:

> *Holy Communion separates us from sin. The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is "given up for us," and the blood we drink "shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins." For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins: For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord. If we proclaim the Lord's death, we proclaim the forgiveness of sins. If, as often as his blood is poured out, it is poured for the forgiveness of sins, I should always receive it, so that it may always forgive my sins. Because I always sin, I should always have a remedy.*
> *(St. Ambrose, De Sacr. 4, 6, 28: PL 16, 446; 1 Colossians 11:260, CCC 1393)*

The *Catechism* also tells us:

> *As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this living charity wipes away venial sins. By giving himself to us Christ revives our love and enables us to break our disordered attachments to creatures and root ourselves in him... (CCC 1394)*
>
> *Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ increases the communicant's union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins. Since receiving this sacrament strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ, it also reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. (CCC 1416)*

Jesus made himself the scapegoat for our sins...

In Chapter 16 of the *Book of Leviticus* we read how a Priest would ceremoniously transfer the sins of the people onto a goat which was then sacrificed to God for the forgiveness of their sins:

"And when he has made an end of atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat; and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness…" (Lev. 16:20-22)

When a person takes the blame for another person's wrongdoing, they are called a "scapegoat." This is what Jesus did for us as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29, see also, 1 Peter 2:24).

It should be noted that even though our *venial sins* are forgiven when we receive the Holy Eucharist, the Church also encourages us to confess our *venial sins* in the *Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation* (CCC 1458). We all have the desire to share with

another what is weighing on our mind and soul. This desire comes from the Holy Spirit who is trying to lead us into all righteousness and holiness (see, CCC 1431-1433, 1451-1455).

When we confess our sins with a sincere and contrite heart, it demonstrates that we have taking the time to think about what we have done, and why it is an offense to God and others. It's by taking responsibility for our sins and repairing the damage we caused by our sins that we begin to grow spiritually stronger to resist temptation and sin in the future. This is especially true when it comes to *mortal sin*. This is why the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us:

> *By the same charity that it enkindles in us, the Eucharist preserves us from future mortal sins. The more we share the life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is to break away from him by mortal sin. The Eucharist is not ordered to the forgiveness of mortal sins —that is proper to the sacrament of Reconciliation. The Eucharist is properly the sacrament of those who are in full communion with the Church. (CCC 1395)*

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation was instituted by Christ...

Some people believe that the *Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Confession)* was created by the Catholic Church. Nothing could be further from the truth!

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to the Apostles (his first Priests) and said:

> *"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:21-23).*

When Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you," he empowered his Priests to assist him in the forgiveness of sins by speaking with people just as he spoke with people. However, a Catholic Priest does not have the power to forgive a person from their sins, only God has the power to forgive us of our sins (CCC 1441-1444, 1449).

In Chapter 5 of *St. James Epistle,* he tell us:

> *"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects..." (James 5:16)*

Some people think they don't need a Priest to tell them that their sins are forgiven. However, it's not the Priest telling us that our sins are forgiven; it is Christ *himself* telling us that our sins are forgiven. Again, the Priest—acting *in persona Christi capitis*—speaks for Christ so a person can hear from God's Mouth to our ears that we are forgiven of our sins.

Anyone who has heard the Priest recite the *Formula of Absolution* at the end of their confession knows there is a vast difference between telling ourselves that God has forgiven us, and us *hearing* from God that we are forgiven:

"God, the Father of mercies, through the death and the resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (CCC 1449)

When we come before Christ with a repentant heart and admit to him the error of our ways, we allow him to begin to heal the self-inflicted wounds that come from sin. Christ does this by restoring the love, peace and Grace of God that we squandered through sin. This helps us to feel close to him—*and each other*—again.

When we admit to ourselves (*and others*) that what we have done is wrong in the Eyes of God, it is then we can feel our soul being closely united with God once more. God wants us to avoid those things that do not make us feel very good about ourselves. However, God allows us to sin hoping we will learn from our mistakes and finally realize that being in the company of *Him* is much better than being in the company of *sin*…

"Let your conscience be your guide..."

Our soul has a built-in mechanism that helps us to know right from wrong. It's called our *conscience*.

Our *conscience* allows us to know the Mind of God. We all know right from wrong because at the moment of our conception God placed His *Divine Law* into our soul to guide us into what is *right,* and lead us away from what is *wrong* (see, CCC 1954-1960).

The Divine Law is also known as the *Natural Law*. Others refer to it as the *Golden Rule*. Whatever you call it, the Divine Law is our "moral compass" to do unto others as you would want done unto you (see, Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31; Leviticus 19:18 and 34; Tobit 4:15).

If we fail to listen to our conscience and do what is *wrong*, we will feel shame and remorse for what we have done (unless we are not a *psychopath* who has no feelings or remorse for what we have done).

Everyone who ever lived knows right from wrong. How do we know this? Because even a *thief* does not like it when someone steals from them; this is why they know stealing is wrong. A person who is a *cheater* does not like to be cheated, that's how they know cheating is wrong. A person who is a *murderer* knows it is wrong to kill because they wouldn't like it if someone murdered them or their loved-ones. That's how they know murder is wrong...

The teachings of Jesus Christ and his Church expand on the Divine Law. A well-formed conscience in the teachings of Christ helps us to always choose *good* over *evil*. If we pray and ask the Holy Spirit to always guide us, we will eventually be formed into the image and likeness of Christ. This should be the goal of every person who claims to be a follower of Christ.

For more information about our *conscience*, please read paragraphs 1777 to 1785 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Thank you!

Jesus continually cleanses us from our sins with the Grace we receive through his Word and Sacraments…

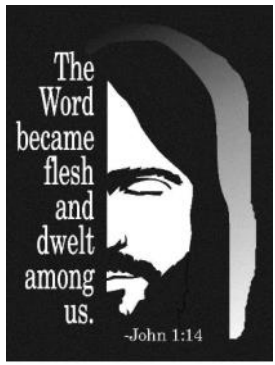
At the beginning of St. John's record of the Gospel, he describes Jesus by saying:

> *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it… And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John 1:1-5; 14)*

In the *Old Testament*, God spoke to His people through prophets. They listened to what God said to them, and then repeated it to us (see, Hebrews 1:1-2). In the *New Testament*, he who was in the beginning with God (God's Son) became *flesh*—which means God assumed our human nature (see, CCC 464-469).

One of the reasons why Jesus assumed our human nature was so he could redeem it (see, CCC 456-460). In theological terms, this is known as the *formula of exchange*. St. Athanasius of Alexandria explained the *formula of exchange* this way:

> *"He [Jesus] was made man in order that we might be made gods..." (On the Incarnation 54.3. St. Athanasius)*



Based on Sacred Scripture and what the early Church Fathers understood about Christ, the *Catechism* gives us more insights as to why Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us:

> *The Word became flesh for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God, who "loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins": "the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world", and "he was revealed to take away sins": Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; dead, to rise again. We had lost the possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in the darkness, it was necessary to bring us the light; captives, we awaited a Saviour; prisoners, help; slaves, a liberator. Are these things minor or insignificant? Did they not move God to descend to human nature and visit it, since humanity was in so miserable and unhappy a state? (CCC 457)*

Grace, the indwelling presence of God...

The way our fallen human nature is redeemed is by purifying it with the Divine Life of Christ. And because we soil our soul with sin so often on the way to sainthood, we need continuous cleansing from our sin. This is why Christ offers his *Sanctifying Grace* to us through the Holy Spirit. Here are some excerpts from *Catechism* that teach us about the Grace of God:

Our justification comes from the Grace of God. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life. (CCC 1996, John 1:12-18; 17:3; Romans 8:14-17; 2 Peter 1:3-4)

Grace is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the Grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an "adopted son" he can henceforth call God "Father," in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church. (CCC 1997)

The Grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the sanctifying or deifying Grace received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification: Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself. (CCC 1999, John 4:14; 7:38-39, 2 Corinthians 5:17-18)

Sanctifying Grace is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with

God, to act by his love. Habitual grace, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call, is distinguished from actual graces which refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification. (CCC 2000)

We must be in a *State of Grace* to receive Holy Communion

Being in a *State of Grace* means not having mortal sin on our soul. If we receive the Body or Blood of Christ with mortal sin on our soul we have committed a sacrilege (see, CCC 1385). This teaching is rooted in what St. Paul says to the Corinthians:

> *"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself." (1st Corinthians 11:27-29)*

Paragraph 1415 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms what St. Paul says:

> *Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the Sacrament of Penance. (CCC 1415)*

If we do not sincerely repent from our sins, we will be in jeopardy of being separated from God for all eternity. Why? Because we chose to embrace *sin* rather than the Wisdom and Will of God which was given to us so we could grow into full

communion with God. How do we enter into full communion with God? By keeping all of His commands (see, John 14:15-21, CCC 1861).

Remember, God has never condemned anyone to Hell. We condemn ourselves by saying, "No" to God. Hell exists because God knows if we don't want to live according to His Wisdom and Teachings for the very short time we are here on earth, we certainly won't want to live by them for all eternity in Heaven...

I am in danger-of-death and there is no Priest available to hear my confession. What do I do?

If you are in danger-of-death and there is no Priest available to hear your confession, the *Catechism* tells us that if we repent with a sincere and contrite heart from our sin and ask God to forgive us, He will grant us absolution (see CCC 1451-1452, Canon 960-961).

However, in order to avoid being in a danger-of-death situation with mortal sin on our soul, we should seek out the *Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation* whenever we have committed a grave sin, and wish to repent from it.

"And we, though many, throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord…"

At every Mass, Jesus invites us to dine with him. However, he is not only the host, he is the main course as well! With all accuracy we can honestly say, "The *host* is the *Host!*"

Just before we receive our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, the Priest, Deacon or Extraordinary minister says to us, "The Body of Christ."

After we consume our Lord, his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity is absorbed into our body and soul helping us to become one with him. However, by consuming the Body of Christ we also become united with all those who are also consuming the Body of Christ, thus making us one body—*one community*—in Christ!

Fr. John Foley, SJ is a liturgical and classical composer, theologian, liturgist and writer. In his beautiful and poet song, *One Bread, One Body* (1978) he captures the dual truth of what happens every time we consume our Lord in the Holy Eucharist:

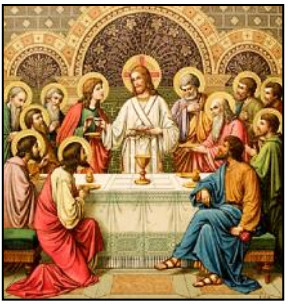
> *"One bread, one body, one Lord of all,*
> *one cup of blessing which we bless.*
> *And we, though many, throughout the earth,*
> *we are one body in this one Lord…"*
> *- Fr. John Foley, SJ, 1978*

I am sure the melody of this timeless Catholic hymn popped into your head once you began to read the lyrics. You probably won't get it out of your head for some time to come. That's not a bad thing since it reminds us of our intimate connection with Christ *and* with our fellow Catholics.

At our *baptism*, we became an adopted child of God (CCC 1265; 1997; 2021). This means we are much more than just part of the *community* of God, we are part of the *family* of God!

One of the places we feel most connected to our family is at the dinner table. Sharing good food, good drink and good times is where some of our fondest memories of family-life are forged. It's no wonder Jesus chose to solidify a *new covenant* with his followers during a family meal! Every time we come to Church, it is Christ's hope that we look around at all the people there and realize how big our family truly is!

According to statistics found on Wikipedia, there are approximately 2.6 billion Christians worldwide.[1] Of those Christians, there are approximately 1.35 billion who are Catholic.[2]



"As a dear longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God..." (Psalms 42:1-2)

Although Catholics consider Protestants to be our brothers and sisters in Christ, it saddens us that so many believers in Christ are not consuming the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. This is why the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

> *"The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who are honored by the name of Christian, but do not profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter." Those "who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church." With the Orthodox Churches, this communion is so profound "that it lacks little to attain the fullness that would permit a common celebration of the Lord's Eucharist." (CCC 838)*

And also...

> *The Church's mission stimulates efforts towards Christian unity. Indeed, "divisions among Christians prevent the Church from realizing in practice the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her sons who, though joined to her by Baptism, are yet*

1. Source: Wikipedia.com, retrieved 08/14/2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominations_by_number_of_members
2. Source: *Annuario Pontificio* (Pontifical Yearbook, 2019), retrieved 08/14/2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominations_by_number_of_members#Catholicism_%E2%80%93_1.345_billion

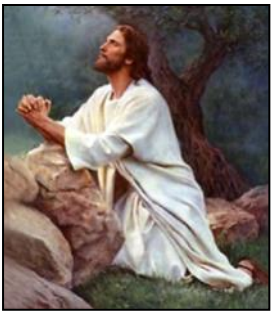
separated from full communion with her. Furthermore, the Church herself finds it more difficult to express in actual life her full catholicity in all its aspects." (CCC 855)

At every Mass, Jesus offers us his Divine Life, first through the Holy Word of God, then in the Holy Eucharist God so that we may become holy, just as He is holy (Matthew 5:48; John 8:11; 1 Peter 1:15; Leviticus 11:44, CCC 103).

However, we also come to Mass each week so we can stay connected to the other members of our Christian family. It is Christ—who is the "main course" at every Mass—who not only unites us with him, but with each other as well! This is why the *Catechism* also says:

The unity of the Mystical Body: the Eucharist makes the Church. Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body—the Church. Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body. The Eucharist fulfills this call: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread:"

If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond "Amen" ("yes, it is true!") and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, "the Body of Christ" and respond "Amen." Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true. (St. Augustine, Sermo 272: PL 38, 1247. (CCC 1396, see also CCC 1329)



In Chapter 17 of John's record of the Gospel, Jesus prays that all of his followers will be *one*, just as he and the Father are *one*:

> *The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. (John 17:22-23. Please read all of Ch. 17 of John's Gospel. It is Jesus' "love letter" to us.)*

No matter what differences and conflicts may divide us as a family, Jesus thought of an ingenious way to always bring us back to be *one* with him, and each other. This happens every time we dine together at the *Supper of the Lord*, which we Catholics call the *Holy Mass*...

Jesus knows the Devil hates anything that is pure and holy!

The Devil hates anything that is pure and holy. This is why he doesn't like to be around Jesus!

Jesus' holiness is an offense to the Devil because it reminds him of how *unholy* he is. Because of this, the Devil flees from the presence of Christ. *Ergo*, if we consume the Life of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, the Devil will flee from *us* as well!

Love is also what chases the Devil away. Love unites us with the ones we love and especially with the one who loves us the most—JESUS!

The Devil hates to see people united in love and especially united in Christ. This is why Jesus invites his family to join him at every Mass to fellowship with him, and each other. This is

one of the ways we grow in our love for Christ and each other and *together,* keep the Devil far from us!

"No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus wants to *divinize* us!

If you are wondering why Jesus gave us his Body and Blood to eat, the simple answer is, "Because he wants to divinize us with himself!" As the saying goes, "You are what you eat..."

In Chapter 5 of St. Mark's record of the Gospel, a woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years touches the cloak of Jesus and is immediately healed (vs. 25-28). In verse 30, St. Mark says that Jesus perceived, *"power had gone forth from him."* Jesus wants the same power that is dwelling in him to dwell in us!

Our divination in Christ begins with our faith in Christ. When we profess Jesus as the Son of God and our Lord and Savior, we then obey his command to be baptized in his name (see, Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38; Acts 16:27-33, Galatians 3:21-27; see also, CCC 1212-1216 and CCC 1226-1227).

After our baptism, Jesus gives us additional ways to invite his Divine Life to live in us. For example:

> In Chapter 4 of St. Matthew's record of the Gospel, Jesus says, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (v.4).
>
> Also, in Chapter 26 of Matthew, Jesus commands us to *eat his body* and *drink his blood* (verses 26-29).

> In Chapter 6 of John's record of the Gospel, Jesus tells us that unless we *eat his flesh* and *drink his blood*, we will have *no life* in us (John 6:27-58).

The more we do everything Christ taught us to do, the more we will literally *feel* the life of Christ living and growing in us. This is why he tells us Chapter 14 of John's record of the Gospel:

> *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him..." (John 14:15-21)*

It is through the indwelling presence of Christ by the Holy Spirit that we continue the process of being *divinized* by Christ after our baptism (CCC 1988). And the more we make Jesus the "Master and Commander" of our life—*and in every area of our life*—the more we will *feel* his life (*his Grace*) living and growing in us as he purifies our mind, body and soul to be just like him—*holy*!

The more we cooperate with the Grace of Christ at work in us, the more we will become one with him, and God the Father. This is why the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)* wants us to know:

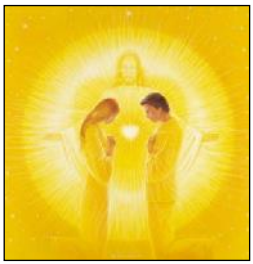
> *The ultimate promise of the Gospel is that we will share in the life of the Holy Trinity. The Fathers of the Church called this participation in the divine life "divinization" (theosis). In this*

we see that God does not merely send us good things from on high; instead, we are brought up into the inner life of God, the communion among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the celebration of the Eucharist (which means"thanksgiving") we give praise and glory to God for this sublime gift.[1]

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* adds:

"Through the power of the Holy Spirit we take part in Christ's Passion by dying to sin, and in his Resurrection by being born to a new life; we are members of his Body which is the Church, branches grafted onto the vine which is himself: (God) gave himself to us through his Spirit. By the participation of the Spirit, we become communicants in the divine nature.... For this reason, those in whom the Spirit dwells are divinized. (St. Athanasius, Ep. Serap. 1, 24: PG 26, 585 and 588, CCC 1988)

In Chapter 10 of John's record of the Gospel, Jesus quotes Psalm 82 when he says, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods?'" (John 10:34).



Jesus, the perfect Son of God, came into this world to help us become the perfect child of God, or as the Catechism says:

The Word became flesh to make us "partakers of the divine nature": "For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God." "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods..." (CCC 460)

1. Source: USCCB.org, retrieved 6/24/21, https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-real-presence-faqs. See also, CCC 398, 460, 1374, and 1413.

It's been said, *"I never really knew God until I met his Son…"* No truer words have ever been spoken. Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God who came into the world to show us, "step by step" what type of person *we* could become if we simply listen—*and do*—everything the Son of God has commanded us to do:

> *The Word became flesh so that thus we might know God's love: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him." "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (CCC 458)*

"Man shall not live by bread alone…"

It may seem odd for Jesus to choose something *visible* like bread and wine to instill his *invisible* life in us. After all, in Luke's record of the Gospel, Jesus tells us if we want to receive the Holy Spirit, all we have to do is *ask* (see, Luke 11:11-13).

However, when we study Sacred Scripture, we will see Jesus teaching us to receive the Holy Spirit in different ways. For example, in Chapter 4 of Matthew's record of the Gospel, Jesus says, *"It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (v.4).

Jesus is saying there is more to life than just eating bread to keep our body alive, we must also consume the Word of God to keep our soul alive. This reminds me of when Jeremiah the Prophet said:

> *"Thy words were found, and I ate them, and thy words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart..." (Jeremiah 15:16)*

What is the spiritual nutrition in the Word of God that helps feed our soul? The answer is, *truth*!

Truth nourishes our soul just as food nourishes our bodies. And *truth* becomes part of our soul just as food becomes part of our bodies. When we hear something we know is true, it becomes part of us deep inside. The *truth* makes us feel whole, complete and alive. People would rather die than to deny what they know to be true.

Jesus proved he was God on earth by not only predicting his death, but by also rising from it. Everything Christ told us is *true* because God cannot lie. When we embrace the Truths of Christ, his Truths become part of our soul and thus God becomes part of our soul. This is why we cannot deny the Truths of Christ; to deny them would be to deny Christ who lives in us.

The Christian Martyrs throughout the centuries gladly laid down their lives for Christ because they were not afraid of what could kill their body, they were afraid of what could kill their soul—the half-truths and outright lies of society!

The Saints believed everything Christ taught us, and because of it, Christ lived *through them, with them* and *in them*. To deny Christ, would be to deny their very existence. That's why they gladly went to their deaths in Christ.

Anyone who studies the Word of God knows the internet, the media, our schools and our government are all laced with confusion about what is *true* compared to what Christ tells us is *true*. This is why Jesus said:

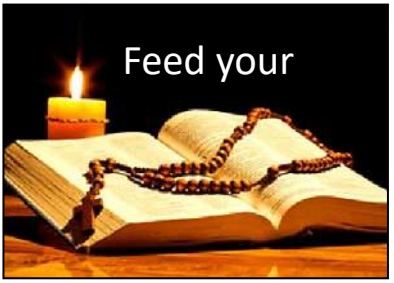
> *"I am the **way**, and the **truth**, and the **life**; no one comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him." (John 14:6-7)*

St. John knew Jesus was the sum of all truth. This is why in the very first chapter of his record of the Gospel he says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and *truth*" (John 1:14).

In Chapter 17 of John, Jesus will pray to God the Father asking Him to sanctify us in *truth* because, *"thy Word is truth"* (v.17).

In Chapter 18, John will once again emphasizes that Jesus is the *Truth* that everyone in the world is seeking:

> *Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the* ***truth****. Every one who is of the* ***truth*** *hears my voice. Pilate said to him, "What is* ***truth****?" (John (RSV) 18:37-38).*



Poor Pilate… The Absolute Truth of what is real and everlasting in our soul was standing before him. But because of his lack of faith in the Son of God, he could not see it. Always remember this: Jesus has it right, and the world has it wrong when it comes to knowing *what is Truth!*

The Holy Spirit is alive in the Word of God…

When Jesus said, *"It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4), he wanted us to know that the Holy Spirit lives in the Word of God. Therefore, if we write the Word of God on our heart and mind, the Holy Spirit of God will live in us too helping us to live according to the Word of God.

Here are some passages from *Sacred Scripture* that reveal how the Holy Spirit will live in us if we live by the Word of God:

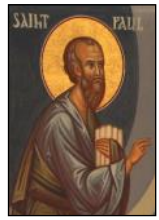
"For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

"And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the Word of God, which is at work in you believers." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

"So those who received his Word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:41-42)

"If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified..." (John 7:37-39)

"May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1st Thessalonians 5:23)



Now keep in mind, that even though Jesus said "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*," Jesus also said:

*"You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear **witness** to me, yet you refuse to <u>come to me</u> that you **may have life**..." (John 5:39-40)*

Jesus just made a distinction between Sacred Scripture *containing* information that will lead us to eternal life (*him*), and how our eternal life is actually sustained *by him*—not just the words he spoke. This is why he says we must *"come to him"* that we may *have life*.

As Catholics, we feed our mind, body and soul with the Word of God *and* the Body and Blood of God. Both contain the presence of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says:

> *"For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body." (Dei Verbum, EN 21, CCC 103)*

And this is why the Catechism also says:

> *The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained." "This presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present." (CCC 1374, also 1407, 1413)*

Remember, God likes both matter and spirit. He gave us our physical bodies and combined them with a spirit (*our soul*). If God wants to impart His Divine life to us through matter *and* spirit, that's His prerogative. After all, He is God, and we are not…

"Thanks be to God…"

When Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, he began the process of offering himself to God the Father as a sacrifice for our sins just as they offered animals for the forgiveness of sins in the *Old Testament* (see, Leviticus Chapters 4-7).

When we sin against God, we forfeit our life with God because sin separates us from God just as sin separates us from each other. We don't like it when someone sins against us, and we don't like ourselves when we sin against another. Jesus will offer his life as a *ransom* for our sins so our life may be restored with God the Father and each other.

As Jesus prepared his body for death, he also took time to *give thanks* to the Father (see, Luke 22:17-20). The Greek word for "giving thanks" is *eucharisteo*. Now you know where we get the word *Eucharist*. Pay close attention to the *Liturgy of the Eucharist* the next time you are at Mass. Listen for how many times we "give thanks" to God for all His Goodness (see, CCC 1328).

At the first Passover meal, people worshipped and gave thanks to God for sparing their first-born from the Angel of Death (see, Exodus 12:27). The *Last Supper* is also known as the *Passover of the Lord*. The Holy Mass is the new Passover for us Catholics. At every Mass, we give thanks to God for sharing His Divine Life with us in the Holy Eucharist so we may be spared from *spiritual death* because of the sins we have committed. *Thanks be to God!*

As a reminder, the Eucharist cleanses us of our *venial sins*, but our *mortal sins* are cleansed through the *Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation [Confession]*. Please see Paragraphs 1394-1395 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for more information on this teaching...

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

At the *Last Supper*, Jesus turned unleavened bread into his Body (see, Matthew 26:26 and John 6:51). Catholics refer to the consecrated bread of Christ as the *Holy Eucharist*, *Holy Communion*, the *Bread of Life* or the *Blessed Sacrament*.

Some people may find it odd that Catholics spend time meditating and praying before the *Blessed Sacrament*. Remember, because we believe Jesus is truly present in the Holy Eucharist, we worship and adore him just as we would worship and adore him if he were standing before us with his resurrected body (CCC 1377-1378).

When it comes to worship, God knows that if we do not take the time to worship Him, we will find some other person, place or thing He has created to worship. Or worse yet, we will end up worshipping ourselves! This is why St. Paul tells the Romans:

> *"...because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator…" (Romans 1:25)*

Many people love spending quiet time before our Lord in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. They attend Adoration to tune-out the noisy confusion of life so they can more clearly hear the Voice of God speaking to them in their mind and heart.

This is why the Lord tells us in Psalm 46, *"Be still, and know that I am God..."* (v.10).

The *Catechism* gives us some more insights about why Catholics worship and adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament:

Because Christ himself is present in the sacrament of the altar, he is to be honored with the worship of adoration. "To visit the Blessed Sacrament is a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, and a duty of adoration toward Christ our Lord" (Paul VI, MF 66, CCC 1418)

Worship of the Eucharist. In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession." (Paul VI. MF 56, CCC 1378)

The tabernacle was first intended for the reservation of the Eucharist in a worthy place so that it could be brought to the sick and those absent outside of Mass. As faith in the real presence of Christ in his Eucharist deepened, the Church became conscious of the meaning of silent adoration of the Lord present under the Eucharistic species. It is for this reason that the tabernacle should be located in an especially worthy place in the church and should be constructed in such a way that it emphasizes and manifests the truth of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. (CCC 1379)

It is highly fitting that Christ should have wanted to remain present to his Church in this unique way. Since Christ was about to take his departure from his own in his visible form, he wanted to give us his sacramental presence; since he was about to offer himself on the cross to save us, he wanted us to have the memorial of the love with which he loved us "to the end," even to the giving of his life. In his Eucharistic presence he remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us, and he remains under signs that express and communicate this love:

The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease. (CCC 1380)

"Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life…"

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist! It is my hope and dream that one day, every follower of Christ throughout the world will come to believe in our Lord's Real Presence and realize the utmost importance of feeding our soul with his Words *and* Sacraments!

The resources I used to help explain why the Real Presence of Christ is real, came from *Sacred Scripture* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. I have also shared some of my personal insights about how I came to understand and believe in the Real Presence. I hope and pray that nothing I have shared with you has either confused you about our Lord, or led you into error about the Church's teachings of our Lord.

As I said at the beginning of this pamphlet, the Holy Eucharist is a bit of a mystery. This is why I cannot—*nor any other human being cannot*—fully explain *how* Christ is truly present in the Holy Eucharist. The best we can do to help understand the mysteries of God is to draw upon examples we already know about God. And although some of these examples are considered "insufficient" by some, for others, they help take us another step closer to believing, *that with God*, *all things are possible!*

Here's something else to think about when it comes to solving a mystery…

Once we solve a mystery, we tend to forget about it. Our brain moves on to think about the other things we do not yet understand. Maybe our Lord gave us some mysteries to think about because he never wants us to stop thinking about him? When we stop thinking about Christ, that's when the Evil One gives us other things to think about. That's how we begin to drift away from Christ, and closer to the Devil until our soul becomes easy prey for him!

By thinking about the mysteries of Christ, they help keep us connected to Christ as we anticipate the day when we will finally meet Christ in his heavenly Kingdom. It's then he will explain all of His mysteries to us in-person!

For now, the mysteries of Christ are a test of our *faith* and *obedience* in Christ. We must trust that the Son of God knows what he is talking about even if we do not! And in the process of doing this, we may discover that our *obedience* to our Lord's teachings will unlock our *understanding* of them!

Now, here's one last thing I would like for you to remember…

It is not only the responsibility of the religious workers in the Church to spread the Good News of Christ, it is the responsibility of *every* follower of Christ to help others come to know, love and serve our Lord so they can be formed more and more into his image and likeness. I hope you will share what you have learned with all those around you—be they Catholic or non-Catholic. We know from Sacred Scripture that our Lord never intended his flock be divided by so many different denominations of Christianity. As Jesus tells us in Chapter 10 of St. John's record of the Gospel:

> *"I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd..." (John 10:14-16)*

May our Lord bless and keep you in his care now and forever!

In Christ,
Fr. Mark Matthias

Are you Catholic, or Christian?

Some of our Protestant brothers and sisters think that Catholics are not Christians. They do not understand that the word *catholic* comes from the Greek word, *kataholos*. *Kata* means, "according to," *holos* means, "the whole." Put them together and you have, "according to the whole" which is another way of saying, *universal*.

The Catholic Church is present in almost every country in the world The next time someone asks you if you are a "Catholic" or a "Christian" just respond to them, *"Yes!"*

(source: https://uscatholic.org/articles/201608/was-jesus-a-catholic/, retrieved, 06/24/21)

For more information about the Holy Eucharist, please visit these websites:

The Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN)

https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/teachings/qa-on-the-eucharist-178

The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions and Answers *(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB])*

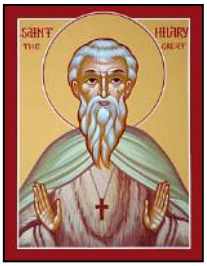
https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-real-presence-faqs

The Catechism of the Catholic Church:

https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM

EPILOGUE:

From a treatise on the Holy Trinity and the Holy Eucharist, by Saint Hilary, bishop



We believe that the Word became flesh and that we receive his flesh in the Lord's Supper. How then can we fail to believe that he really dwells within us? When he became man, he actually clothed himself in our flesh, uniting it to himself for ever. In the sacrament of his body he actually gives us his own flesh, which he has united to his divinity. This is why we are all one, because the Father is in Christ, and Christ is in us. He is in us through his flesh and we are in him. With him we form a unity which is in God.

The manner of our indwelling in him through the sacrament of his body and blood is evident from the Lord's own words: This world will see me no longer but you shall see me. Because I live you shall live also, for I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. If it had been a question of mere unity of will, why should he have given us this explanation of the steps by which it is achieved? He is in the Father by reason of his divine nature, we are in him by reason of his human birth, and he is in us through the mystery of the sacraments. This, surely, is what he wished us to believe; this is how he wanted us to understand the perfect unity that is achieved through our Mediator, who lives in the Father while we live in him, and who, while living in the Father, lives also in us. This is how we attain to unity with the Father. Christ is in very truth in the Father by his eternal generation; we are in very truth in Christ, and he likewise is in us.

Christ himself bore witness to the reality of his unity when he said: He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in him. No one will be in Christ unless Christ himself has been in him; Christ will take to himself only the flesh of those who have received his flesh.

He had already explained the mystery of this perfect unity when he said: As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so he who eats my flesh will draw life from me. We draw life from his flesh just as he draws life from the Father. Such comparisons aid our understanding, since we can grasp a point more easily when we have an analogy. And the point is that Christ is the wellspring of our life. Since we who are in the flesh have Christ dwelling in us through his flesh, we shall draw life from him in the same way he draws life from the Father.

St. Augustine said:

"The Eucharist is our daily bread. The power belonging to this Divine Food makes it a bond of union. Its effect is then understood as unity, so that, gathered into his Body and made members of him, we may become what we receive…" (CCC 2837)

The mysteries of God

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that God is a mystery to us at times (see, CCC 234-237). One of these mysteries is our Lord's Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist (see, CCC 1336, 1402, 1405).

Although our minds cannot completely comprehend *how* the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ is present in the Holy Eucharist, we can trust that because Jesus tells us at the *Last Supper* to "*eat his body"* and "*drink his blood"* that he knows what he's talking about even if we do not...

With that said, the more we understand the rituals of the *Old Testament* and what Jesus said and did in the *New Testament* to bring those rituals to fulfilment, the more we will begin to unravel the mystery of how the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is *real! - Fr. Mark Matthias*