

## Theology of the Eucharist

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**Eucharistic Sacrifice:** The Eucharist is truly a "sacrifice." This glorious Sacrament was instituted by Christ at the Last Supper "in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages." (CCC - 1323) The celebration of the Eucharist makes present for us (throughout the ages and in all places) the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. "In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner." (CCC - 1367) It includes the Church's offering (sacrifice) and the offering of all present united to one another and to Christ. The "sacrifice" of the Mass "completes and surpasses all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant." (CCC - 1330) "The Mass is a true and proper sacrifice which is offered to God...a sacrifice for the living and the dead...a sacrifice offered to God in satisfaction for the sins of man." (Council of Trent, Sept. 17, 1562)

**Representation:** The "sacrifice" of the Mass is a "representation" to the Father of Christ's infinitely valuable sacrifice on the Cross. He doesn't suffer and die again; he did that once and for all on Calvary. "In the sacrifice of the Eucharist the bloody sacrifice which Christ accomplished once and for all on the Cross is represented...and its salutary power is applied to the forgiveness of sins." (CCC - 1366) **In every Mass every day in every Catholic Church around the world, Christ represents His passion and death over and over again as a perfect sacrifice of love and He makes His infinitely efficacious sacrifice "present" and fruitful for us.**

**Real Presence:** Christ, as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is present everywhere and all times and He is made present in many ways. "But He is present most especially in the Eucharistic species." (CCC - 1373) This presence is called "real," not in that the others forms of his presence are not real, "but par excellence, because Christ thereby becomes substantially present, whole and entire, in the reality of His body and blood." (Mane Nobiscum Domine, 16) This mode of Christ's presence is unique and therefore it raises the Eucharist above all the other Sacraments and makes it the "source and summit" of the Christian life. "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....It is presence in the fullest sense." (CCC - 1374) Through the gift of the Eucharist, Christ makes Himself "wholly and entirely present" for

us. The Eucharist is a mystery of presence, the perfect fulfillment of Jesus's promise to remain with us until the end of the world.

**Transubstantiation:** Transubstantiation is the technical term used by the Council of Trent to describe what happens at the consecration in the Mass. It refers to the "change" that takes place - the substance of the bread is changed into the Body of Christ and the substance of the wine is changed into the Blood of Christ (trans - substance). Now only the appearances (accidents) of bread and wine remain. "By the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the bread into the body of Christ our Lord, and the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood." This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called 'transubstantiation.'" (CCC - 1376)

**Memorial:** The Mass is a "memorial" (commemoration) of Christ's unique sacrifice made present for us. "It is not merely the recollection of past events, but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men. In the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real." (CCC - 1363) This Eucharist memorial reminds us of the past, makes Christ really and truly present in the here and now, and impels us towards the future, when Christ will come again at the end of history. Memorial acclamation: "We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again." Now at the right hand of the Father, Jesus is no longer bound by time. The mystery of His Passover can be made present to all men in all times.

**Communion:** In the Eucharist we have "communion" with Christ. We become, as Saint Cyril (387 A.D.) said, "Christbearers" one body and blood with Him. Receiving the Eucharist means entering into a profound communion with Jesus. By partaking worthily in the Eucharist we also experience "communion" with our brothers and sisters in Christ - ecclesial communion. In the Sacrament of the Eucharist we ratify and renew our covenant with the Father. When someone hands us the Consecrated Host and declares that this is the Body of Christ, and we say "Amen," we are swearing to live our part of the covenant in communion with Christ (covenant-union) and united with His entire Church. It is a fraternal communion, cultivated by a "spirituality of communion" which fosters reciprocal openness, affection, understanding and forgiveness.