

The Holy Eucharist

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Donuts and Dogma; St. Michael Catholic Church

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Prayer....

Recap on Last week...

The Holy Eucharist... the source and summit of our Faith.

This is the ultimate love affair of our Lord with us, so intimately giving Himself to us. Talk about Familial love!

This is it at it's best... We are Family, we share in the ONE body of Jesus Christ!

First, let's look at the big picture here of why this is so important to us and see the beauty of this Truth. Then we will hit more of the apologetics of how to easily answer common objections to the Eucharist.

What is it? Our Lord taught and the Catholic Church upholds that Jesus Christ is truly and substantially present body, blood, soul, and divinity in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine.

So transubstantiation is the changing of the substance of the bread and wine into the substance of our Lord's body and blood, while the accidents, or appearances, of bread and wine remain unchanged (most of the time... Eucharistic miracles).

Why go over such basics? Apparently, one pew survey found that 2/3 of mass attending Catholics do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist! WOW! That should SHOCK all of us! Of course, at St. Michael this figure would be that 100% of us Catholics.... Are Catholic. Need I say more? Of course we all believe in the Real Presence, this defines us as Catholics. But I digress...

So the big picture first... the beauty of this sacrament and Truth!....

This is a true offensive point for us here. Yes, we defend our Lord here too, but this is where He reaches out and grabs us with His deep love, drawing hundreds of thousands of non-Catholics into His fold.

So never leave a non-Catholic without giving them a positive defense of the Eucharist, even if they do not bring it up first. Be on the offensive front with this, lay the challenge down for them that leaves them so hungry for our Lord in the Eucharist,

that their hearts are softened and they come crawling to the altar rail to receive their very Lord and Creator. They already have this most intimate desire, but we must plant the seed for them to see that this is first and foremost an act on God's part reaching out to them, and not the other way around.

Remember the words that Mother Theresa pondered on so deeply and that we have reflected on in preparation for our consecration to Jesus through Mary last week. Those beautiful words of "I thirst." Christ thirsting for souls!

This is your strong-hold Catholics! Stand up! Defend! Be courageous! Do not let a moment go where you do not proclaim the beauty of the most Holy Eucharist! Holy Mother Church is like a lion in a cage, she needs not defending, but just let out! Her Truth is the Fullness of Truth, and she has a reasonable answer to EVERY objection! And the Eucharist IS the source and summit! So do not let any conversation about defending the faith not end with inviting them to the Truth of the Eucharist! If they ask about Mary, the Saints, purgatory, etc... answer the questions... but then YOU bring up the Most Holy Eucharist! This is our greatest stronghold of grace that all people are thirsting for. It tears through the muck of pride and intellectual arguments to get right to the heart of every

person longing for their Lord and their Lord longing for them. It is like a bride and groom, giving each other their very flesh to become one body... so intimate! How much more intimate is Our Lord giving His very flesh and blood to consume into our very bodies! In-to-me-see! This is way more intimate than even the marital embrace! Wow! So, yes, get excited! Don't let anyone live without having this true intimacy! This is THE offensive front. And yes, it will OFFEND, just as it did in Jesus's day! He taught this, and many of his disciples walked away, they were offended and could not accept it. He turns to us and says, will you also leave?

We answer as Peter did... to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!

Beautiful indeed! **But now, let's look at THE BIG OBJECTION to the Eucharist, how to answer it, and a bit of background information.**

The one BIG Objection:

The Eucharist is not really Jesus's body and blood, it is symbolic! Just look at John 6: 63 "The Spirit gives life; the

flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you--they are full of the Spirit and life.”

So see, they say, it is the symbolic because the flesh counts for nothing and the words are what give Spirit and Life, not the flesh. So it cannot be His actual flesh that He is talking about.

Another way to put the Protestant logic goes like this: Jesus is saying things that are confusing. His disciples think he's being literal. Jesus clears it up by saying “No no guys, I'm not saying that you should eat my flesh. My flesh profits nothing! I'm speaking with Spirit and life, which is metaphorical in nature.”

Why are we mentioning Protestants so much in this apologetics class? Because this is one of the primary Catholic/Protestant dividing points, and they deserve to know this most deep intimate form of love that their Creator has for them. They long for Jesus, yet do not consume His very body, blood, soul, and divinity. So there is so much in common and that they can profit from by having this deeper understanding of their Lord and HIS desire to enter into them, thus bring about more unity by sharing in the one Christ. Of course, they are not able to partake in the physically receiving Him until they are one in His One Church. This is not being mean on the

Church's part, no more so than Church upholding that fornication is a sin. What do I mean? Let's say that an engaged couple really loves each other, they are committed and totally loyal to one another. So why can they not sleep together? They can't share in the one flesh union until the wedding night, after the vows and sacrament has made their love a binding **covenantal union!** So too if a non-Catholic believes in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, they cannot partake of the one flesh union until they are one in the Church. It would be speaking something false with the body that is not yet true with the soul! Ok, so again I digress, but the back-ground is helpful and foundational!

Now, how do we respond to this big Protestant objection?

Answers to why we believe in the Real Presence:

1. Going back to the Protestant objection that it is Jesus's WORDS that He had spoken that give spirit and life... What are those words? Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and me and him.... Truly truly, you must eat my flesh and drink my blood. Those are the words! So do it!

2. He says over and over again “my flesh,” “my flesh”. Then he states “**the** flesh is of no avail.” The term “the flesh” is used elsewhere in Scripture referring to sins of the flesh, often pointing to our sinful nature, or concupiscence. It clearly points to mankind’s inclination to think on a natural, human level. Just look at John 8:15–16 where Jesus tells his opponents: "You judge according to the flesh, I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone that judge, but I and he who sent me." So “the flesh” is not to be equated to “my flesh.” After all, he would not say something like “Eat my flesh, but it is a waste of time.” Of course, HIS FLESH is of GREAT AVAIL! It has brought about the salvation of the world, and all Protestants should agree with this! So we are building on the common ground!
3. We do not receive His flesh alone. We receive his Body, blood, soul, and divinity all combined! So when they say The flesh is of no avail, we say amen! If we received his flesh ALONE then this would be eating a dead body. That would be cannibalism, but we do not, we consume the living risen Christ with all four aspects combined!

4. If it is symbolic why does He emphasize over and over again that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood? Multiple times he says it...

"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" (John 6:53–56).

All of John 6 is just so powerful! In fact, my brother even memorized the whole thing and would say it right off the top of his head so he was always ready for any objection to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist... Talk about a powerful testimony to a protestant when they heard a Catholic site such a long section of scripture word by word from memory!

5. The Jewish Passover background does not allow for this to be symbolic. Think of the Passover... what were you to do? You killed an unblemished lamb and sprinkled the blood over the door post. Then if you went inside and said

you know what... I think I will have some lamb cookies, and not actually eat the lamb. What would happen? You would wake up to find your first born dead.

So why do we think with the new Passover meal would be any different? It is in this new Passover where Jesus is the Lamb and He gives us His very flesh and blood!

Though not proclaimed dogma or anything by the Church as far as I know, Dr. Scott Hahn beautifully shows how Jesus even goes so far as to include HIS own sacrifice on the cross in the Passover meal that he shared. How? By skipping the 4th cup of consummation at the upper room, and going through the passion until he finally drinks of the 4th cup of soured wine held up on that hyssop branch at the cross when He says "I thirst." So when He says "It is finished," the IT that He is referring to (at least in part), is the Passover meal....!!! WOW! What love He has for us!

So you see, folks knew about this Passover contextual background in Jesus's day. St. Paul reminds everyone of this in 1st Corinthians 5, "Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast."

6. What about the word used to “eat”. "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me" (John 6:57). The Greek word used for "eats" (*trogon*) is very blunt and has the sense of "chewing" or "gnawing." This is not the language of metaphor.
7. This is the only place in scripture where we see his disciples leaving over a doctrinal issue. In John 6:66 we see that many of them walked away, never to follow Jesus again! If it was a metaphor or He was just speaking symbolically, then why does Jesus not clarify as they walked away? No, he let them leave. He let them be offended, and he did not go back.

Why do Protestants hold this?

These are just a few of my own thoughts and do not take into the whole historical record, of course, due to time.

If the real presence is real, where do you get it from? You would need authority to have transubstantiation take place. That would have to date back to Jesus, through the apostles. In other words, you would have to be a Catholic priest. When

you break from the unity, how do you get Jesus really present in the Eucharist? It would be like me saying the words of consecration. They would not have the effect of transubstantiation as I do not have the priestly office. So it is with any protestant pastor, or anyone not a priest. They cannot trace their lineage to Jesus with this special authority. So the Eucharist MUST become symbolic. It is all they can claim. Then let's find some proof texts to support this newer idea, of course becoming pretext.

Now historically, non-Christians actually accused the early Church of cannibalism. Like I said earlier, we are not cannibals (we do not eat a dead human body), but the accusation actually strengthens the Catholic position that even from those first years after Christ's resurrection, Christians believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. After all, if the early Christians believed it to be just symbolic, if the early Christians were protestant and not Catholic, then why would the non-Christians accuse them of being cannibals? It would make no sense!

To conclude, we have seen the what/or rather who the Eucharist is, we have seen the big picture of the beauty of Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist. We now know of the powerful offensive front (even more than defensive) that we have with the spreading the knowledge and love of the Eucharist, we know THE BIG protestant objection and 7 points to help lead them to this deep and loving Truth of their Lord seeking after them! And we can see why non-Catholics may have rejected Christ in the Eucharist and may continue to do so.

This is a series on apologetics, a series to know and answer the question "Why are you Catholic?" For me, the answer is clear, so near and dear to my heart! **IT IS THE HOLY EUCHARIST! IT IS THE SOURCE AND SUMMIT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE! SO, why are YOU Catholic? If this is not part of your answer, you need a real gut check! If we have our VERY LORD in the EUCHARIST, HOW COULD WE EVER LEAVE THE CHURCH? I DON'T CARE WHAT ANY OTHER CHURCH HAS! I DON'T CARE HOW INVITING AND SOCIAL THEY ARE! I DON'T CARE HOW THEY MAKE ME FEEL! I DON'T CARE HOW GOOD THEIR MUSIC IS! I DON'T CARE HOW CHARISMATIC THEIR PASTOR IS! All**

of these are good things, don't get me wrong! But if they do not have the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, then everything else pales in comparison! I don't need the fluff, I hunger for the food that satisfies! I need the meat and potatoes, the Bread of Eternal Life! I NEED Jesus!

I end with an invitation! An invitation to go deeper into your walk with Christ. Spend time in prayer after receiving Him at mass, thanking Him for this gift, holding Him dear to your heart, and listening to His voice speak His love song to your soul in this most intimate of moments! Thank you and God bless!

PRAYER

According to a Gallup poll, 70% of Catholics view the Body & Blood of Our Lord as merely "symbolic".

Two years later, a New York Times/CBS News poll showed results of almost 2/3 of Catholics not believing in the Real Presence either.

"In 1992, Reverend Peter Stravinskias, a well-known Catholic apologist and editor of The Catholic Answer, obtained funds from the Saint Augustine Center Association and hired the Gallup Organization to conduct a national poll asking Catholics: "Which one of the following statements about Holy Communion do you think best reflects your belief?" Only 30 percent of the respondents chose the first option: "When receiving Holy Communion, you are really and truly receiving the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine" (which Stravinskias interpreted as the "orthodox" Catholic view). Twenty-nine percent indicated "you are receiving bread and wine, which symbolize the spirit and teachings of Jesus and in so doing are expressing your attachment to His person and words." Twenty-four percent believed "you are receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, which has become that because of your personal belief."

Ten percent said "you are receiving bread and wine, in which Jesus is really and truly present." Finally, 8 percent said "none of the above," "don't know," or refused to answer. "

"Two years later, the New York Times (June 1, 1994) reported the results of a New York Times/CBS News poll on Catholics and their beliefs about the Real Presence (see also Commonweal, January 27, 1995). In this poll, Catholics were asked whether the bread and wine used in the Eucharist are "changed into the body and blood of Christ," or are "symbolic reminders of Christ." The reporter, Peter Steinfels, concluded that "almost two-thirds of American Catholics believe that during Mass, the central sacred ritual of Catholicism, the bread and wine can best be understood as 'symbolic reminders of Christ' rather than as actually being changed into Christ's body and blood." He also wrote: "Even among the subgroups of Catholics who said they attended Mass every week or almost every week, 51 percent described the rites as strictly symbolic." As further evidence of a "hollowing out" of belief in this vital area, Steinfels reported that young Catholics are more likely than older ones (70 percent vs. 45 percent) to hold the symbolic view. "

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