

Understanding the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist

By Michael Jacques and Austin Rahill

Over the last several decades, there has been a substantial bleeding in the Church. Her children are leaving in droves for other denominations that "feed them" spiritually. We have had this massive bleed for decades in the Catholic church, with Catholics leaving the church for either no religion at all, for Protestantism, whether it be evangelical or fundamentalist, or for non-Christian religions.

Further, when you look at the statistics of those who walk away from the Church and those who choose to stay in the Church, some are left with the thought of "were we ever taught about the Real Presence of Jesus in the Divine Sacrament?"

In this five-part series, we plan to discuss the two fundamental beliefs that are so significant to Catholics, so important that no one would ever leave the Catholic faith if they better understood them both. It is also necessary that every Catholic be able to articulate a defense of why we believe in the Reality of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

The first "belief" is understanding why the church teaches that the sacrifice of Calvary is made present on the altar at every Mass. Thus, we participate in union with the Priest and Christ in offering the sacrificial memorial of Calvary through the Mass, as instituted at the Lord's Supper, and that it replaces the memorial sacrifice of the Jewish Passover.

This is the most powerful prayer on earth and is, in fact, where heaven and earth meet in prayer. If this belief were better understood, no one would ever want to miss Sunday Mass. Further, every Catholic would have the desire, whenever possible, to participate in daily Mass. This concept may seem unfathomable to some. How could it be possible that the body of Christ could be made present on the altar at every Mass throughout the ages?

The second "belief" is understanding why the church teaches that the Eucharist is the full and Real Presence of Christ, having the body, blood, and Divinity of our Lord and Savior even in the smallest particle of bread or drop of wine.

It has been our experience that many protestants refuse to believe in the Real Presence, and it is one of the biggest stumbling blocks in trying to explain our Catholic beliefs, similar to when the Jews walked away in John 6. It is extremely difficult for those outside of the Catholic Faith to believe such a thing: to many, it strikes of cannibalism. We believe that from a Biblical perspective, it is easier for someone to understand and believe in the True Sacrificial nature of the Mass, which can then lead to an acceptance of the Real Presence in the Eucharist.

So, this series is designed to help parishioners understand these two important teachings and appreciate why the Catholic Church is absolutely correct in both of these two principles, as well as being truthful in all other doctrines of the church. We are all called to evangelize, to bring people to Christ, to bring our brothers, sisters, wayward children, friends, and relatives back to the Church of Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church.

This series explaining these two teachings will make it possible for you to share them with your children and others. You can help bring people back to the church if you study, teach, and pray. May God Bless Us ALL on this Journey.

Part One: God's Covenant with His People

By Michael Jacques and Austin Rahill

As a result of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, it was necessary and planned that God, and God alone, had to fix the problem. ALL of the Covenants in the Old Testament failed in that they were imperfect Covenants between God and Man. Through the Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus the Christ, we now have a Covenant between God and God. Jesus establishes this very Covenant with his very own flesh. In this New Covenant, God frees all people from the Slavery of Sin through the Sacrifice of the Cross, the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus, our paschal lamb. Only God, an infinite being, could make a sacrifice of atonement for sin. This Covenant wages war against sin and death once and for all by the Sacrifice of the blood of the Lamb who was slain in God's new Covenant with His people (e.g., Gen 17:7, Ex. 6:7, Ezek. 34:24, 36:28 & Jer. 30:28). ALL of the previous covenants revealed a glimpse of the ONE Covenant that was to come and save us from damnation. Only God could achieve such an undertaking.

In the Old Testament Covenant, the feast of Passover for the Jewish people was a feast where they commemorated what happened when God took those people that he had freed from slavery in Egypt, and at Mt. Sinai, he formed them into what God called my people: "You are my people; I am your God." God entered into this Covenant that God would always be their God. They would always be His people by following His commands. In this covenant, the Jewish Passover required an "unblemished Lamb" to be Sacrificed, upon which they would eat the lamb as part of the Liturgical Celebration (Ex 12:1-14). It is important to emphasize here the fourth step. In the Old Testament, the Passover ritual is not completed by the death of the sacrificial lamb. It is completed when the Israelites eat the "flesh" of the lamb that is slain so that they might be delivered from bondage in Egypt and, ultimately, from death (Ex 12:8). During this Passover Sacrifice, the story of God's deliverance is retold by the father, thus making present God's deliverance again. Moreover, once the sacrifice is completed, God commands that the Passover be celebrated every year in the spring "as a memorial" of the deliverance won for the people of God (Ex 12:14). It was in Egypt that they were instructed to take bowls of blood of the slain lamb home and sprinkle the blood of the lamb over the doorposts of their home with a hyssop branch so that the angel of death would PASS-OVER the home and not render judgment upon it.

The Cross of Jesus repairs the infraction of sin and gives us the possibility of becoming FULL children of God, Brothers, and Sisters of Christ, in the family of God in heaven. The New Covenant is ratified in the blood of Jesus by his suffering and death on the cross and rising from the dead. Now we, God's people, have entered into a covenant with Jesus to carry on his work in our world and evangelize the whole world. In the final analysis, the Old Testament Jewish Passover Covenant is transformed by Jesus at the Last Supper into the New Eternal Covenant of Christ's Blood, which is what is represented at the Holy Sacred Liturgy, Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for Catholics:

Gal 3:26: For you are all the children of God by faith, in Christ Jesus. [27] For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ. [28] There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] And if you be Christ's, then are you the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the promise.

Part Two: In the Blood

By Michael Jacques and Austin Rahill

After the fall of mankind, when Adam and Eve became "as gods," they realized their world view changed abruptly. As exhaustion, hunger, pain, loss, embarrassment, separation, nakedness, anger, and frustration set in, they hid themselves. When God called out to them (knowing full well where they were), they replied by coming forth from the bush clothed, thus altering our relationship with God for generations to come.

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. Leviticus 17:11

In short, God permitted the slaughter of animals for a threefold purpose: food, clothing, and blood atonement. While the first two are obvious, we would like to talk about the third one: blood atonement. From this time forward, God would require blood sacrifice if man were to approach Him. Fast forward to the Levitical tribe, and the blood offerings were standardized and made an integral part of the Hebrew Religion. There were unbloody offerings: grain, first fruits, meat, and drink, and the bloody offerings. The blood is essential to understand, in that, it is the very life force of a being, as the soul animates the flesh.

In George Maclear's, *A Class-book of Old Testament History*, he writes: "Blood sacrifices are those in which the life of a victim was taken, and its blood poured upon the altar. It is to be observed," Maclear (1952:135) stresses, "that these were limited to the herd, the flock, and all clean birds. Blood sacrifice formed an integral part of Israelite worship, a practice that meant the death of the victim with an aim of restoring and/or maintaining [a] right relationship with God. The originality of this type of sacrifice in Israel may not be unconnected with God's revelatory act, apart from its natural dependence and thankfulness to God."

What does it mean when God becomes flesh through the incarnation? Jesus institutes a New Passover with his very blood on the Cross. This means the Sacrifice of Calvary is made present at every Mass and thus becomes the most powerful prayer on earth. Knowing the value of this perpetual sacrifice, how could you leave it? Why would you?

In 108AD, St. Ignatius of Antioch, while being transported to Rome, where he eventually met his martyrdom, wrote a series of letters. He had been ordained a Bishop by St. Peter and taught the faith by St. John:

"I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David; and for drink, I desire his blood, which is love incorruptible." Letter to the Romans, 110AD

"Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God...They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in His goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes." Letter to the Smyrnaeans 6:2-7:1, 110AD

Years later, the basic order of the Mass was laid out by St. Justin Martyr, an early Christian philosopher, in 155AD, who believed that through the Mass, we participate in Christ's eternal sacrificial offering to the Father for all our sins. As you read through the Bible verses below, try to visualize how devout Jews familiar with the Old Covenant Liturgy of the Jewish Passover would have reacted, and understood Jesus' New Covenant from the Lord's Supper through the passion, cross, and resurrection of Christ. The Mass is the proclamation of Christ's death; we

are proclaiming Christ's Passion and Sacrifice. We have the notion of "memorial sacrifice," often written as one word, "**remembrance**," and/or "**memorial**."

"And He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'" Luke 22:19

"In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." 1 Corinthians 11:26

"This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast." Exodus 12:14

"Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God." Numbers 10:10

Part Three: The Eternal Now

By Michael Jacques and Austin Rahill

When our parents pass away, they dispense all of their worldly goods to their children through what is known as a will. This legal document entitles them to what their parents have set aside for them to receive. Hopefully, our parents set us up to be successful in more areas than just the material. God created us in His glorious image and refuses to leave us orphans. As our Father, He wills for us to have everything we need.

When we teach children the majesty of God, we tell them how God knew them in their mother's womb, and He also knows their great, great grandparents at the same time he knows their great, great grandkids. How is this possible? God is outside of time. This little phrase usually blows the kids' minds because we ask them what the name of their spouse is? Laughingly they reply, "I'm only 14." Well, we tell them that God knows the name of their spouse, their first child and their first and fifteenth grandchild's name. Once they come back to earth, we explain that we are dealing with a God who is not bound by time or space.

"You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you." Ezekiel 28:15

The early Church fathers believed the Fall of the Angels started over the announcement of God becoming flesh. Satan, in particular, had a hard time with this and ultimately refused to bow or give allegiance to Our Blessed Mother and the future role she would play on earth and in heaven. Satan could not fathom how or why God would become flesh. The simple answer is: God became flesh to be known by us. In the opening chapter of John's Gospel, he introduces the idea that Jesus is the Word:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:1, 14

Jesus is God become flesh, who created light, heaven, earth, and space. The "spoken" word (Logos in Greek) became flesh and dwelt among us and ultimately saved us from the untenable relationship we had with the Father. If we take this and apply it to Jesus' words and actions, then we know that the Eucharist is really something physical, spiritual, and eternal. The last thing Christ left us before He left this earth was His very own flesh and blood in an eternal sacrifice that never ends, because it is an eternal offering of the sacrifice of the Son to the Father and we are present at this offering at every single Mass we attend. Why? So that Christ can feed us with His very flesh and blood to communicate grace that transforms us from within, to become the children the Father originally created us to be.

What this means is that Calvary is ever present in time and for all time. How? Because God permits this action through His ordained minister to communicate His grace to His children who need it, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and physically in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. To say that the Eucharist is symbolic is to say that His sacrifice didn't happen or wasn't important. To the contrary, it was because of His sacrifice on the Cross that He presented the sacrifice beforehand at the Last Supper. The sacrifice completes the action of salvation, but it doesn't stop there, it starts there.

"This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Matthew 26:28

The divine life our Lord offered and shared for our salvation in the sacrifice of Good Friday is the same offered and shared at the Last Supper. The Last Supper, the sacrifice of Good Friday, and

the resurrection on Easter form one life-saving, life-giving event. How? Because Christ is God, His once and for all sacrifice is ever present in time. It goes all the way back to the beginning of time with Adam and Eve and all the way to the end of time for the forgiveness of all of mankind's sins. The death of Christ occurs within history but has an eternal reality that transcends history.

"...the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world." Revelation 13:8

Through the Mass, we participate in Christ's eternal sacrificial offering to the Father for all our sins.

The original question in this essay was, 'what is a will?' The answer: A will allows you to leave everything you have on this earth for your children who are left behind after you are gone. Did Christ accomplish that?

Part Four: It's Time to go to the Bank

By Michael Jacques and Austin Rahill

As recounted in the Book of Exodus, God commands Moses to tell the Israelites to mark in lamb's blood above their doors in order that the Angel of Death would pass over them and leave them unharmed, thus the name Passover. To complete the atoned sacrifice of the lamb, the Jewish people had to eat it. And by doing so, they internally became **One** with the sacrifice.

For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. - Leviticus 17:11

When teaching teens about God's gift of divinity, we often use the "bank" analogy: You check your bank account one day and it reads \$123.45, then the next day it reads \$1,000,123.45. Confused you go to the bank teller, and ask, "what's the deal with my account?" The bank teller smiles and says, "God heard your prayers and stopped in yesterday to deposit a million dollars." Ecstatic, you are speechless for a moment and then ask, "how do I get that money out?" The teller answers, "You have to get off your butt and make a 'transaction.'"

The sacrifice of the Mass is the same way. You enter into the Church, give thanks, be contrite, confess your sins, and receive the greatest gift of **All** time: the **Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity** of the **Lamb** of God. Through the holy sacrifice of the Mass, we participate in Christ's eternal sacrificial offering to the Father for all our sins. The Eucharist is the **Real Presence**. Bread and wine are transformed into Christ **Fully Present: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity**. Why? To feed us so we might participate in the **Divine** as Christ participated in **Humanity**.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature. 2 Peter 1:3-4

Divinization, (the transforming effect of **Divine Grace**) likewise surfaces in the liturgy, during the preparation of the gifts. The priest prays, "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the **Divinity** of **Christ** who humbled himself to share in our humanity." Additionally, the "Prayer after Communion" prayed aloud by the priest often contains the phrase, "so you may make us sharers of **His Divine Nature**."

The Bible says that Jesus fed thousands of followers by giving thanks and miraculously turning a small lunch of five loaves of bread and two fish into a feast. When all were satisfied, the disciples collected more than Jesus had to begin with. At first, the crowd was amazed and appreciative. They enthusiastically praised Jesus. Then Jesus addressed the crowd. This time, He emphasized the spiritual lesson behind his prior miracle.

Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. John 6:27

Many in the crowd who had been praising Jesus turned away from Him in disappointment after Jesus said,

This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day. John 6: 40 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. John 6:51

Then the Jews began to complain about Jesus because He said, ***I am the bread that came down from heaven. They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now give us his flesh to eat and say, I have come down from heaven?'*** John 6:41-43

Christ told us in all four Gospels and St. Paul reinforced that the bread becomes Christ's body, and the wine becomes Christ's blood. In his Gospels, John writes about how the Apostles took the concept literally. Even as many turned away and left Jesus, Simon Peter did not.

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God. John 6:69

The Church, from its inception until the present day, has always believed that the bread becomes Christ's body, and the wine becomes His blood, literally. So how can anyone take it symbolically without saying the apostles, disciples, Jews and the Church all got it wrong? If eating His flesh is symbolic, then it would follow that Christ's death on the cross is also symbolic. It wasn't really Jesus hanging up there, but symbolic flesh, and symbolic blood on the cross. Did Jesus give us His real flesh and blood for the life of the world or just His symbolic flesh and blood for the life of the world?

There is so much mounting evidence that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist that we consume, and it can transform us. The reality is that it is time for us all to go to the bank and make some transactions to seriously change ourselves and change this world.

Part Five: Signs are Important

By Austin Rahill

A sign is that which signifies something greater than itself. When we see a “Stop” sign, we know that we have to bring our vehicles to a complete stop or there will be consequences. What is a stop sign but an octagon piece of metal on a stand? Nothing in itself. But, when the sign is followed, it could be the one thing that saves your very life. It is a sign that should never be taken symbolically (not literally), or the consequences could be grave. Likewise, the Calvary event (that happened several thousand years ago) was a major sign from God that signifies salvation, even to today, because of what it represents.

The Mass is the most powerful prayer on earth because you pray and offer the sacrifice of Calvary through, and with, Christ for the remission of sins. The “Eternal Now,” once and for all is the Sacrifice of Calvary, because Christ is God who is outside of time and is ever present in time going from the beginning of time for Adam and to the end of time for ALL of man’s sins.

“Lamb” was “slain from the foundation of the world.” Rev 13:8

That, is, the death of Christ occurs within history, but has an eternal reality that transcends history.

When the Priest hold his hands over the gifts of bread and wine, the Holy Spirit is called down in Fire to transform those gifts into a Sacred Reality through what is called the **Epiclesis**. In theology the term is called **Anamnesis** (recalling). The Priest is not only recalling the event but acting in **Persona Christi**, to ultimately make the **Presence Real**. As the Priest “makes present” the species of the body and blood of Christ, we receive nothing less than the very flesh and blood of our God. Why? Because Christ said so. How? Because God is God. This is the sole reason God became flesh-to feed us, save us, and transform us into the men and women He created us to be. Jesus opened us to an existential reality and existence present in Heaven forever. We have the absolute tools for our salvation to either embrace and transform or ignore and perish. The Eucharist is the very life blood of the Church and communicates Grace through its efficacious properties.

Jesus knew full well when He was bringing forth His chosen Apostles from all walks of life that they would be His **Alter Christus** (i.e., other Christs or Sacramental dispensers of Grace) to this world that desperately needed, and still needs, salvation. These Apostles (Bishops of the Catholic Church) would literally redeem and feed the flock with the very life of Christ through Sacramental Grace. The Eucharist is literally Jesus the Christ. Our Sacramental disposition (openness to theological truths) depends on the magnitude of grace given by Christ to the recipient. In short, the more open we are to the truth and reality, the more Grace we will receive.

Martin Luther explained that we are a dung heap covered in snow with Christ’s Grace being the snow. This couldn’t be more of a lie if it came from the depths of hell. We are created in the image and likeness of God; through sin, we lose our likeness and diminish our image.

Sacramental Grace transforms us and creates us anew. The Grace **Elevates** (gratia elevans) and **Heals** (gratia sans). The Grace literally restores us to what Christ wanted for us before the fall. Jesus did this through His mission, actions, and presence. To look at the Eucharist as symbolic is a slap in the face of Christ and His theological diagram of Grace. I challenge ALL of you no matter where you are at in your belief in the Eucharist to take some time in prayer and put this in Christ’s hands and ask for a boost in your belief. If you don’t believe, pray “Lord, help my unbelief.” If you do believe, pray “Lord, increase my belief.” May God nourish us all with His Holy Eucharist!