

The Eucharist: Catholic Beliefs and Practices  
*The fourth in a series of teachings on the Eucharist*

I was at one of our Catholic schools for Mass a while back. A Communion Minister mentioned to me that some of the Precious Blood had accidentally spilled on the floor. I covered up the spill with a purificator and then, after Mass, knelt at the spot of the spill in order to properly clean up the spill. Another Communion Minister who was present, related the incident to a member of my staff saying that I had made a big deal out of that issue of the Precious Blood spilling on the floor. My staff member retorted, "It was a big deal!"



The Eucharist is the body and blood of Jesus Christ! Chapter 6 in the Gospel of John is most definite about the presence of Christ in the Eucharist: "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal" (Jn 6:54). Some of the followers of Jesus found this discourse, not only intellectually and religiously problematic, but nauseating. Throughout the OT, there were specific prohibitions against the eating of flesh with its blood, blood being the life principle. Some of Jesus' followers actually walked away from him, but Jesus did not equivocate or soften what he was saying. He even said it more forcefully.

From our more contemporary perspective, we would ask, "How is Christ present when what we see and taste is but bread and wine?" The term used by the Church for centuries to explain this is transubstantiation: "Jesus Christ, whose body and blood in the sacrament of the altar are truly contained under the appearances of bread and wine, the bread having been transubstantiated into the body and the wine into the blood by divine power." While there is a substantial transformation, the accidental nature of the bread and wine remain. The substance is no longer merely bread or wine, but Christ. This substantial change is visible only through the eyes of faith and is based on the words of Jesus himself. So based on what Jesus taught, the teaching of the Church solidly asserts that in the Eucharistic species Christ is present body, blood, soul and divinity.