

The Most Holy Eucharist Series

PART II: EUCHARISTIC DOCTRINE ON THE REAL PRESENCE

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During the 1500's, a form of Christianity developed that was consciously not Roman Catholic. This form of Christianity withdrew six whole nations from the Catholic Church and has determined the culture of most of North America, including the United States. Moreover, this form of Christianity, on principle, denies that Christ, at the Last Supper, instituted the priesthood and empowered ordained priests to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass – at which bread and wine are changed into the living Flesh and Blood of Christ. Consequently, it is imperative to know what the Catholic Church taught as infallible doctrine during this most divisive era of Christian history. The main source of information is found in the Council of Trent, which met for eighteen years from 1545 to 1563.

Since our focus here is on the Real Presence, we will concentrate on what the council was called to defend and declare as defined doctrine on the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. There are five canons specifically defining the Catholic Church's faith in the Real Presence, and each canon is worded in the form of an "anathema". *Anathema* means "accursed." Each canon states: "If anyone says...let him be anathema." This means anyone who denies one of these five dogmas is thereby denying a divinely revealed mystery of faith and ceases to be a Catholic. We will identify each teaching with a title, quote what the Council of Trent defined and briefly explain each definition.

Part One (*see previous pamphlet*)

- 1. Meaning of the Real Presence**
- 2. Transubstantiation**

Part Two (*found in this pamphlet*)

- 3. The Extent of Christ's Presence**
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3. THE EXTENT OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

Having defined what takes place in transubstantiation, the Council of Trent identifies the extent of this presence. Christ is literally present wherever the physical properties remain of what had been bread and wine. Says Trent, "If anyone denies that in the venerable Sacrament of the Eucharist the whole Christ is contained under each of the species and under every portion of either species when it is divided up, let him be anathema."

The key word here is "species". The Eucharistic species are the physical properties of what used to be bread and wine before transubstantiation - the species are what is sensibly perceptible in the Holy Eucharist. The species are the size, texture, taste and weight of what was formerly bread and wine.

What does the Church tell us about the species? She infallibly teaches that the entire Christ is entirely present in every particle of the consecrated host and in every drop of what looks and tastes like wine. In the whole Host, Christ is there. Broken in half, Christ is in both parts. Even a single particle contains the whole living Christ. How this needs to be known and believed in our "post-modern" Christian world!

We are also told that the whole Christ is fully and equally present in either species, so we do not have to receive under both forms. A single drop in the chalice after consecration contains the whole Christ.

4. REAL PRESENCE INDEPENDENT OF COMMUNION

It must seem strange that anyone would come up with the idea that Christ is present only if and when and as long as a person goes to Communion, but once Communion is over, there is no more Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. As strange as it may seem, this is exactly what many of the so-called reformers have held. So many people in the sixteenth century said Christ is present only when and if and as long as you are receiving the Holy Eucharist. But the Council of Trent declared: "If anyone says that after the consecration, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not present in the marvelous Sacrament of the Eucharist, but are present only in the use of the sacrament while it is being received, and not before or after and that the true body of the Lord does not remain in the consecrated Host or particles that are kept or left over after Communion, anyone who denies that, let him be anathema." (Session 13, can.3)

If you know what ideas are being circulated today in nominally Catholic quarters, you have no doubt how relevant this cardinal definition is. To deny the doctrine of transubstantiation is only logical for those who have separated from the Catholic Church to either reject the Eucharist entirely, which some do, or keep the word "Eucharist" in name and talk about Christ's Presence only in Communion. But we see what happened and is happening now again to the meaning of Christ's "presence" in the Eucharist once the real meaning of transubstantiation was lost. You may call it the "Lord's Supper." You may call it the "Liturgy." You may call it the "Eucharist." But people no longer speak of a "Real Presence" which does not depend on its being received by the faithful.

I have reasoned with too many priests who are caught up in the miasma that is penetrating the Catholic Church today. I tell them: "Look Father, Christ is present in the Eucharist not only when you or the people receive Communion. He is present in the Eucharist. Period."

A young man recently came to rostrum after I had given a lecture in Ann Arbor. He told me he was sitting in church during a Mass at which Holy Communion was distributed in the form of leavened bread, which is wrong, but nevertheless, it was consecrated. He watched the people coming up to Communion and noticed the floor was covered with crumbs, not crumbs of bread, but particles of the Sacred Species. He told me, "After everybody left the church, I went over to the sanctuary and began putting the particles into my handkerchief. The pastor saw me from the sacristy and shouted, 'What are you doing?' I told him I was picking up the particles after Holy Communion because I understand each particle is Jesus Christ. The pastor told me 'Get out!' He saw I did not move, so he pulled me by my collar and dragged me out of the church!"

We better know - we better understand - that the Church defined that the whole Christ is present even under a microscopic particle of the consecrated Host. Once we believe that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Holy Eucharist, it is only logical then to respect and adore our Lord, no matter how small the particle or drop from the chalice may be.

5. EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

This definition comes as no surprise. Once we believe Christ is really present in the Holy Eucharist, it is only logical to conclude that we should worship Him. The last thing we human beings want from another human being is to be ignored. The same is true with Christ present in the Eucharist. So now we look at the definition on the Holy Eucharist as the Adorable Sacrament.

The Council of Trent goes into some detail defining what so desperately needs to be known, publicized and practiced today: "If anyone says that Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not to be adored in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist with the worship of *latria*," [that means the worship only to God] "including the external worship, and that therefore the Sacrament is not to be honored with extraordinary festive celebrations, nor carried from place to place in processions, according to the praiseworthy universal rite and custom of the Holy Church or that the Sacrament is not to be publicly exposed for peoples' veneration and to those who adore the Holy Eucharist are idolaters, let him be anathema." (Session 13, can.4). Human language could not be clearer. Nor could the message be more important.

As our reflections go on, we should have ample opportunity to further explain and expound on the solemn teaching of the Church on the adorableness of Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament. I have been privileged in working for the Holy See for more than thirty years. I know there is one thing the present Holy Father wants: he pleads and begs the bishops of the Catholic Church not only to tolerate, but to promote adoration of the Holy Eucharist. I may be bold to say that the future of the Catholic Church depends in large measure on believing Catholics acting on their belief and adoring our Eucharistic Lord. However, it is not only the future of the Church which depends on this mystery of faith being believed, understood and lived out. It is indeed the welfare of the whole world. This I know, because that is my assignment from the Vicar of Christ to do everything in my power to promote Eucharistic adoration, first among members of the hierarchy, then among priests, and then among all the people of God. It is not only the hope of the Holy Father to restore faith in the Real Presence where it has been removed, but also to strengthen the peoples' faith in the Blessed Sacrament where it is still preserved. Thus, believing in the Real Presence, Catholics will act on what they believe and thereby obtain from Jesus Christ what only He can give - the light and the strength to the spiritually blind and paralyzed human beings of today. This comes from the same Christ who walked the streets of Palestine doing good then. He wants to do good now, but it depends on our faith.

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