Is It Really You?

One of the most important tenets of the Catholic faith is the Doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. What does this actually mean?

Let’s go back to the very beginning of the Eucharist – the Last Supper. It was in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, earlier on the night that Christ was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, where he was eating the Seder meal (Passover Meal) with the Apostles, where Christ took bread and wine, gave thanks to the Father and gave it to His disciples saying, “This is my body.” and “This is my blood.” This was the institution of the Eucharist. He also said, “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.” (Luke 22:19), which commanded the apostles to continue the Eucharistic feast as a replacement for the Passover feast.

So, what about this would cause Catholics to believe in the Real Presence as a Doctrine of the Faith? Simple – Throughout scripture, we see where God the Father or Jesus speaks and reality is changed. In Genesis 1:3, God says, “Let there be light, and there was light”. Reality, as we know it, came into existence at that moment. John’s gospel clearly tells us of the power of God’s Word:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

John also tells us of the power of Jesus:

“He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.”

We know that Jesus is the “Word made Flesh”. That He the Son, the second person of the Trinity, was with God the Father from the beginning and everything came into being through Him. Simon was changed from a mere fisherman to Peter, the head of the apostles, at the word of Jesus. After the ascension, Saul, the chief persecutor of those who followed The Way (later known as Christians), was blinded during a vision with Christ and later was transformed into Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles and author of a majority of the New Testament…at the Word of Jesus.

God, speaking to the great prophet Isaiah tells us, “So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:11)

Also, “The Lord of Hosts has sworn, saying, ‘Surely as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, so it shall stand’”. (Isaiah 14:24)

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus Himself says, “For human beings this is impossible, but for God, all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26)

One final note: Eating this Body and Blood of Jesus is NOT optional. In the Gospel of John, verses 47 – 58, Jesus preaches the following (emphasis added):

Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. **I am the bread of life.** Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. **I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.** The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Jesus said to them, **“Amen, amen I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever.”**

After this passage, those following Jesus were concerned saying that this teaching was hard, and asked who could accept it? As a result of this, many of his followers returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. However, Jesus did NOT, as he customarily did, explain this as a parable to the Twelve – that his words had some sort of metaphorical or symbolic meaning. Rather, He simply turned to them and asked, “Do you also want to leave?” (John 6:67). Jesus KNEW what He was going to do at the Last Supper and was preparing His followers for it.

Given these transformations, prophecies, witnesses, and statements, as well many others throughout the Holy Scriptures, it should not strike us odd that Jesus, who gave his Disciples the ability to Heal, Exorcise Demons and Resurrect the Dead, could, and in fact did, impart to them the ability to transubstantiate simple bread and water into His most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity at the Last Supper.

Wait a minute – that’s a $50 word – Transubstantiate. What does it mean? Here’s an easy way to understand it: Every physical item in the universe has two properties – Form and Substance: What it looks like and what it’s made out of. A painting or a sculpture can be incredibly realistic – even 3-dimensional – but no matter its Form, its Substance remains the same: Sculptures are marble, clay or wood and paintings are canvas, paints, and texture. We, as humans, can easily change the Form of things – Transform them – but their Substance remains unchanged. Only God can take something, say simple bread and wine, and leave their Form as it is, but change the actual Substance – Transubstantiate them – into the Body and Blood of Christ. The Eucharist retains the Form of bread and wine – look, feel, smell and taste – but has had its substance miraculously changed to the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

So, this is a great theory, but is there any evidence that it’s really true? In a word, YES! Do a simple search on Amazon for “Eucharistic Miracles” and you’ll be amazed at the results. One that is FREE on Kindle, by Father Antony Netikat is titled: “100 Eucharistic Miracles: Proved by Science – Approved by the Church”. Another is ”[A Cardiologist Examines Jesus: The Stunning Science Behind Eucharistic Miracles](https://www.amazon.com/Cardiologist-Examines-Jesus-Stunning-Eucharistic/dp/1644134772/ref=sr_1_4?crid=MLGZPR6JGXZK&keywords=eucharistic+miracles&qid=1688328617&sprefix=eucharistic+miracles%2Caps%2C110&sr=8-4)” by Dr. Franco Serafini. These are modern, real-world examples of Eucharistic Miracles taking place or being proven in the 20th and 21st centuries…testing performed by scientists using modern technology that prove the Eucharist has the substance of human flesh and blood.

So why do we have to eat Him? Simple answer – Jesus is the perfection of the lamb sacrificed during the Passover in Egypt. The Hebrews were to slaughter an unblemished lamp, cook it, and eat it standing up, fully clothed with shoes on, to be ready to leave Egypt at a moment’s notice. The blood of the lamb had to be smeared on the doorposts and lintel to notify the Angel of Death to pass over that household. Typology, which we have already talked about, shows that Jesus is the perfected Paschal Lamb and that His blood not only saves us from death, but imparts eternal life. Sacrifices in ancient Israel were always consumed (this is where the word consummated comes from) as the final sealing of a pact or covenant. Jesus’ pact with us is that consuming His body and blood grant eternal life.

One last thought: Remember that as Catholics we have access to the full deposit of Faith – Holy Scripture, Holy Tradition and the teachings of Saints and Mystics throughout the ages. It was not by accident that one of our most recent and beloved saints – Pope Saint John Paul II – stated the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, is both the “Source and the Summit” of our faith.