

merely a sacred meal to commemorate the Last Supper, and were not believed to be the banquet of the Body and Blood of the Savior. As an instance of the veiled language used, we may quote the following from an ancient inscription: "Take the food sweet as honey of the Savior of the holy ones, eat and drink holding the fish in thy hands." The true meaning of this was plain to a Christian, but not to an unbeliever. The "fish" was the secret name of the Savior." The "fish" is said to be held in the hands, because in those days the Sacred Host was received in the right hand supported by the left, and then conveyed to the mouth.

Symbols and illustrations found in the catacombs. In one of the oldest chambers of the Catacomb of St. Lucina, a fish symbolizing Christ is represented as bearing on its back ~ basket of bread and a cup of red wine. As one of the commentators explains, "What appears on the surface of the water is bread and wine; what sustains this appearance beneath the surface is the living Christ." This beautiful illustration of the Real Presence dates from the early years of the second century. Another in San Callisto, later by a hundred years, shows us a table on which are laid a fish and a piece of bread; on the left, a figure representing Christ or a priest is consecrating the bread, and on the right a woman with outstretched arms is adoring or returning thanks.

Proof of the Real Presence from the lateness and insignificance of the errors opposed to it. For fully a thousand years, the doctrine of the Real Presence was entirely unopposed: Christ, who promised to be with His Church all days even unto the end of the world, would not have suffered His children to live in the grossest error and idolatry during all those centuries.

The insignificance of the errors. When the doctrine was at length assailed, all the skill and determination of its opponents, who left no stone unturned to destroy it, produced no argument worthy of consideration.

(1) The first time in Christian history when the Real Presence was denied was in 1047 by

Berengarius (d. 1088). He held that the words, "This is My Body," meant, "This is not My Body but a figure of it." That is to say, Christ never gave men His Flesh to eat, and therefore violated the promise He had most distinctly made. This interpretation at once aroused the indignation of Christendom; it was branded as directly contradictory to the ancient faith of the Church and the teaching of Christ himself; it was withdrawn by its author, who died repentant.

(2) Some five centuries later, the doctrine was attacked by the Protestants. Luther seems at first to have held the traditional teaching of the Church, but later maintained that Christ is present in the Blessed Eucharist only at the moment of its reception in Holy Communion; he forgot that Christ simply said, "This is My Body," and not, "This will be My Body when you receive it." Zwingli revived the doctrine of Berengarius. Calvin proposed the far-fetched theory that the words, "This is My Body," means, "This is not really My Body, but when you receive it, you receive into your souls a spiritual influence from the Body of Christ which is in Heaven." Osiander thought that, as God became Man, so He became bread; hence, "This is My Body," would mean, "This is not My Body, but bread to which My Divinity is united." These are but a few of a great number of conflicting interpretations invented by the Reformers to place as wide a gulf as possible between themselves and the Church they had abandoned. In more recent times men have refused to give the words of Christ their true meaning, chiefly because they measure God's power by their own: what seems impossible to them must, they believe in their ignorance that it is also impossible to God.

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“Do This in Memory of Me”

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It is the Solemn Teaching of the Church that in the Blessed Eucharist Christ Himself - His Body and Blood, His Soul and Divinity - is really, truly, and substantially, contained in the species (accidents, appearances) of bread and wine; that His presence is effected by transubstantiation, *i.e.*, by a change of the substance of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ; that He is wholly present both under the species of bread and under the species of wine; that when the sacred species of the bread or the wine are divided, He is wholly present in each part or division; that the Real Presence begins, the instant the consecration is completed; that it is not restricted to the moment in which the Blessed Eucharist is being consumed; that it continues in the hosts that may be reserved after Holy Communion has been given; and that Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is to be worshipped with the supreme worship due to God alone (Council of Trent, Thirteenth Session, 11 October 1551, Chapters 1-6, Canons 1-11).

Proof of the Real Presence from the Words of Christ. The words used by Christ when He promised the Blessed Eucharist, and when He actually instituted it, prove that He is really present therein.

Christ's words of promise. We read in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel how Jesus fed a multitude of five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes; and how, on the following night, He walked upon the waters and rejoined His disciples as they were crossing the lake to Capharnaum. The next day, we are told, He again addressed the multitude, who had followed Him in ships to that city. By the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, He had proved to them His love and consideration for them and His dominion over

the laws of nature: He had thus prepared their minds and hearts for His doctrine of the heavenly food of the Blessed Eucharist. "Do not labor," Jesus said to them, "for the food which perishes, but for the food, which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you". And when they said, "Lord, give us this bread always" He continued saying: "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." He then tells them clearly that the Bread is His Flesh: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." And when they objected saying: "How can this man give us His Flesh to eat?" He insists on the literal truth of His words, telling them with still greater emphasis that they must not only eat His Flesh but drink His Blood: "Amen, amen, I say unto you: except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you; he that eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day, for *My Flesh is meat indeed and My Blood is drink indeed*: he that eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood, abides in Me and I in him." Many of His disciples thought this "is a hard saying," and would not accept it. Jesus said to them, "Does this scandalize you?" *i.e.*, "Are you shocked at what I have said?" If (with some modern heretics) they had thought that, by "eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood," He merely meant that they were to take His doctrine and commands into their mind and heart, they would not have been shocked. They were shocked, precisely because they understood Him to speak of the true eating of His Body and drinking of His Blood. If they had mistaken His meaning, He would have shown them their error. He would have disowned the doctrine they ascribed to Him. Nevertheless, He did not disown it. Instead, He insists again on the Divine character and value of the Food to which they object. However, they are not satisfied, because He has not withdrawn or

mitigated the command to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood. The stumbling block still stands in their path; and so they leave Him and "walk with Him no more." Then turning to the Apostles He said: "Will you also go away?" And Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Only you have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have known that You are the Christ, the Son of God." Those noble words, so full of loyalty and love, we adopt as our own, promising to be faithful to Jesus no matter who may be false to Him.

Christ's words of institution. Jesus fulfilled His promise at the Last Supper. He had been longing for that hour to come: With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer." Taking bread He blessed and broke, and gave to His disciples and said, "Take and eat, this is My body."

And taking the chalice He gave thanks and gave to them, saying, "Drink all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins." Jesus uttered those words at a most solemn moment: He was delivering His last address, His last wishes and commands, to the Apostles, for on the morrow He was to be put to death; hence, He spoke in the very plainest speech to the simple and childlike men who sat at table with Him. The words were in themselves unmistakable, but they were doubly so in the light of the promise already made that He would give them His Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink. The Apostles believed, as we believe, that, when He said, "This is My Body . . . This is My Blood," the bread and the wine were changed into His Body and Blood.

Proof of the Real Presence from the Faith of the Apostolic and early Church. The faith of the Apostolic and early Church in the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist is attested by the words of St. Paul and the Fathers; by the *discipline of the Secret*: the symbols and illustrations found in the catacombs; and the belief of Eastern sectaries. The fact that the Church from the very

beginning believed in the Real Presence proves that her Founder must have delivered the doctrine to her.

The words of St. Paul and the fathers:

(a) St. Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died" (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

(b) St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. 117) says, "The Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ."

(c) St. Justin Martyr (d. 167), "We take this not as ordinary Bread nor as ordinary drink, but, as Jesus Christ our Savior . . . had Flesh and Blood for the sake of our salvation, have we been taught that also the food consecrated by the word of prayer coming from Him . . . is the Flesh and Blood of that Jesus who was made Flesh."

(d) St. Irenaeus (d. 203): "Wine and bread are by the word of God changed into the Eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ."

(e) St. Hippolytus of Rome (d. 235): "He hath given us His own divine Flesh and His own precious Blood to eat and to drink." Later evidence of this kind is abundant.

The discipline of the Secret. Except when the needs of controversy demanded plain speaking, it was the custom among Christians during the first centuries, and particularly from the end of the second to the beginning of the sixth, to conceal from the heathen the more sacred and mysterious rites of religion and especially the real nature of the Blessed Eucharist. This practice has been termed in modern times, "the discipline of the Secret." Such secrecy concerning the Blessed Eucharist would have been unnecessary, if it were