

# The Evangelization Station

*“Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation”*

CCC §1816



## Newsletter



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## Merry Christmas

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. *And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart (Luke 2:4-19).

Immediately after the fall of our first parents, God, in His infinite mercy, promised a redeemer, who would reconcile mankind with Him. Man would be saved from sin and the eternal punishment, which accompanies it. He would also gain the opportunity to merit eternal life with God in heaven. God choose not to fulfill this promise for thousands of years. Perhaps He waited so long in order that all mankind might be more aware of their misery, and might more ardently desire the coming of the Redeemer. Those years passed slowly. They were dreary and dismal, and even dreadful because of the great Deluge, which swept away vast numbers of the human race, and again, by reason of the reign of fire which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and instantly burned all the inhabitants. During those years, many prayers were offered up for the coming of the Messiah.

The ancient patriarchs and prophets prayed that the heavens would open and let down the King of Justice. In the words of Isaiah they prayed: "Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the skies rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation may sprout forth, and let it cause righteousness to spring up" (Is. 45:8).

But at length the time had come, the seventy weeks of years foretold by the Prophet Daniel (Dan. 9:24) has elapsed, the royal scepter had passed away from the House of Judah and "tidings of great joy were brought to all the people,"

## Christmas Day Homily

### December 25, 2005

All the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 52: 7-10.

God has spoken to us through the Son.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 1: 1-18.

In 1914 on Christmas Eve, during the first months of World War I, the British and German troops faced each other in Belgium. Waterlogged and muddy trenches with barbed wire separated the two armies. There was constant firing of machine guns and pounding of artillery.

To make it feel more like Christmas both governments sent gift boxes for each soldier. The Germans received small Christmas trees with candles attached. Christmas Eve 1914, a cold dark night, the Germans set up the Christmas trees with lit candles above the trenches, then they began to sing Christmas carols. After a few Christmas trees were shot at the British became more curious and moved forward to watch and listen. After awhile the British began to sing the familiar Christmas tunes. By Christmas morning there developed a no mans land between the trenches, soldiers were sharing rations, gifts, chocolate, cigarettes, and singing; soon they were even playing soccer.

But the high command on both sides felt they could not let this continue. The War must go on. Under threat of court martial the troops on both sides were ordered to separate and restart hostilities.

Reluctantly they drifted apart. A British soldier wrote in his journal, "We parted with much handshaking and good will." A German soldier said, "Today we have peace. Tomorrow you fight for your country; I fight for mine. Good luck." By New Year's Day the shooting had restarted. Millions would die before the war's end in 1918.

What happened on that battlefield in 1914 is exactly why Jesus came to this world and comes to each person. In the midst of war, chaos, and insanity, Jesus brought a moment of peace and true brotherhood. Like in the story the Christmas peace and goodwill was short lived and gave way to what

seems more normal; fighting, disorder, and brother against brother.

Jesus has the power to break through the insanity of this world and the insanity of our lives and bring the true peace and unity we desire and indeed were made for. The tragedy of this world is that sin and darkness has held this world hostage for so long that sin and darkness seem to be the normal state of affairs, and most people don't fight it, or want to change it.

Jesus had to come as a human being to show us another way. We don't have to be held hostage by sin. We don't have to be held hostage by disordered passions, desire, addictions, attachment and disunity. We don't have to be condemned by or defined by our sins, failure, weaknesses, and live in a state of guilt. What seems normal is not. Sin is not normal. Sin is a distortion of good. Sin with all its manifestations and consequences only leads to more chaos and ultimately unhappiness. The "good news" of Jesus, and this day is that Jesus gave us a way out, a formula for peace and happiness.

Unfortunately, Jesus' formula for peace and happiness has never enjoyed universal acceptance and so the fighting, frustration, and loneliness goes on. Until Jesus is accepted as the formula and standard the fighting will go on. Among most Christians the message and power of Jesus stays about as long as the Christmas decorations.

In order for Christ to have the desired and lasting effect, for his promises of joy and peace to work, Jesus must have a permanent place in our lives. He cannot be like a sweater put on and taken off.

If this baby we celebrate today is to have any effect in our world and lives he must have center stage. If he is restricted to a back room or a corner the desired effect will not take place, the peace and joy we all desire will be short lived and spotty at best. The baby we celebrate today promises everlasting peace and joy. A peace and joy we all desire of the variety all the money in the world can't buy. However the promises come with a condition-follow my ways, keep my commandments, make me the center and then you will enjoy a peace and happiness, a peace and happiness the world cannot give. And so the challenge of Christmas is to get this Christ child's influence to last the year round, not just a few days, not just on the surface, but to have him penetrate deeply and give him a permanent place in our life. He can't be with all the other stuff in our life that gets forgotten, neglected,

and thrown out; no, this child wants to be, needs to be in the passenger seat at all times, seeing everything and having input on everything. It's a bad sign when he gets neglected to the back seat or gets thrown out of the car all together.

There is so much grace available today, on this Christmas Day. There is so much healing grace and power to restore and convert. This child comes bearing gifts, and he is willing and ready to give them to anyone who is ready to receive him.

We are happy today that God has sent a savior to save us from the sin, sadness, hatred, loneliness, and death that grips the world.

However, our joy and happiness is not full because this child needs more place and space in order to transform our lives into something better and more beautiful~ a life full of light, joy, and grace. We cannot change the world; we can change our lives.

This is the good news and joy of this day and the baby who lies in the manger. He is ready and waiting to penetrate and change our lives, not just for a day or a season, but for a lifetime. No, he is ready and waiting to change our lives for eternity.

-Father Vincent Gilmore O. Praem. Used with permission.

## ***The True Meaning of Christmas***

Each year we are faced with the obstacle of a secular society, which tries to lure us away from the true meaning of Christmas.

We must never forget that we are celebrating the Incarnation. Jesus, the God-man, entered history to make atonement for our sin of rebellion against His Father and to lead us to salvation. Jesus came upon the stage of the world over 2,000 years ago, poor, helpless, and even homeless. Shepherds were told of His coming. In the spirit of giving they brought their own gifts of milk and bread and wool, and, most precious of all, their love. Wise men crossed continents carrying gorgeous gifts. They, too, wanted to give things to the baby Jesus. Of all their gifts the most pleasing to the Child was their love.

Ever since there has echoed in the heart of humanity the Christmas cry: "Give it to the baby Jesus." Yes, give everything to the baby Jesus. Every gift at this season of giving can be given to the Christ Child, if it is given in the spirit of Christ, for the sake of Christ, and the sake of Christ's own, the poor, the neglected, the weak, the weary.

Every act of kindness, every "Merry Christmas," every song, every celebration, every tiny and

tremendous task of preparation, every note of your Christmas carols, every ornament hung on the

tree, every strand of straw in your crib, every good work, every gift given, can be, must be, given to him. Give it; give it all, to the Christ Child.

Giving is the spirit of Christmas. Every gift must be one of love, or it has lost all its meaning. And that love should be centered in the little Child who brought true love to the world.

We must give sorrow for sin; we must give promise of improvement; we must give, above all, a home in our hearts. We must give these things to the Christ Child today. Our hearts are what He wants. We must give them to Him. Our love is what He wants.

We must give it to Him today. Christ became a helpless little one in order that we might feel the heartthrobs that the human spirit holds out to a helpless child. He came to us in so vulnerable a fashion in order that we might come to love Him with the tenderness usually reserved for an infant. In that sweet sense may your Christmas be joyous.

\* \* \*

The Christmas card was introduced in England in 1844.

***December 8, 2010***

## ***Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary***

In the Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* of 8 December, 1854, Pius IX pronounced and defined that the Blessed Virgin Mary "in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin."

## ***Mary's Immaculate Conception Announced in Book of Genesis***

*"In the Advent season, the mystery of the Immaculate Conception prepares us in a special way for the coming of Jesus Christ". The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II celebrated Mass in the Basilica of St. Mary Major, on December 8, 1994, and spoke of the mystery of Mary's conception in salvation history. Here is a partial translation of his homily, which was given in Italian. The Pauline explanation of the biblical expression "grace" is*

indispensable if we are to understand in a correct and satisfactory way the words addressed to the Virgin of Nazareth at the Annunciation:

"Hail, full of grace!" (Lk 1:28). This "*fullness of grace*" points to the *Immaculate Conception*, a mystery which the Church professes and lives today in particular. "*To be holy and without blemish before him*" (Eph 1:4).

The Book of Genesis, especially in the first chapters, relates that God created man "immaculate". In God's sight *he lived all the simplicity of his human nature*; Adam and Eve related to one another in total, mutual trust and, although they were naked, felt no shame (cf. Gen 2:25). However, the "first sin" penetrated this "original innocence" of man created by God; and, as today's liturgy dramatically describes in the first reading, *it totally changed man's relationship with God, having an unfortunate effect on the relationship between man and woman*.

The Book of Genesis first shows *God seeking man*. "Where are you?" (cf. Gen 3:9), he asked him. And man replied: "I heard you in the garden, but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself" (Gen 3:10). The divine Interlocutor knew that this fear was far more deeply rooted. Man felt the need to hide from God, because *he had followed a call other than the Lord's*. Picking the forbidden fruit, our ancestors succumbed to the temptation of becoming *like gods*, capable of knowing good and evil (cf. Gen 3:5), capable, that is, of *autonomously deciding on what is good and what is evil, according to their own criteria*. Thus sin appeared at the very moment when man, yielding to the evil spirit's persuasion, believed that he himself could be like God. Yes, he believed that his task was to become *a god in opposition to the one God*. The "non serviam" became, at the human level, the reflection of the "non serviam" which was first spoken by the spirit of evil.

Here we are as it were touching the root of the mystery. The mystery of today's solemnity, the *Immaculate Conception*, means that Mary, from the very first moment of her conception, was *preserved from the inheritance of original sin*. She was free from it because she had always been destined to be the Mother of Christ the Redeemer.

We hear *the first announcement* of this mystery in the Book of Genesis. Turning to the serpent, which symbolizes the spirit of evil, God said: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike at

your head, while you strike at his heel" (Gen 3:15). These words are known as the *Protoevangelium*. They are the first announcement of the Good News about the salvation that Christ was to bring "in the fullness of time". It will be fulfilled through the work of the "offspring", that is, the son of the woman, who, to defeat the spirit of evil, will give himself up to death on a cross. This truth belongs completely to the New Testament, to the Gospel, but in the words recorded by the Book of Genesis, it has already, in a certain way, been foretold. This is why we speak of the *Protoevangelium*.

The first announcement reflects God's eternal plan to which the Letter to the Ephesians refers. Sin, present from the beginning, does not in fact alter the plan of God who "chose us before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him". Therefore from the beginning *grace* appears *more powerful than sin*.

In a particular way, grace has shown itself to be more powerful than sin in her, eternally predestined to be the Mother of the world's Redeemer. The Angel Gabriel makes this choice known and greets her as "full of grace". He thus lets it be known that in her grace and holiness, deriving from her outstanding election, preceded the moment of conception. All men are redeemed after being contaminated by sin, at least by original sin. Christ redeemed the one chosen to be his Mother and preserved her from original sin. Thus Mary came into the world immaculate and at no time in her earthly existence did sin stain her soul. This is why she is all holy: holy in a far more sublime way than the other saints, who also owe their holiness to the work of Redemption. And since Mary is holy in this way, she was able to conceive the Son of God through the action of the Holy Spirit, as we read in the Gospel: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk 1:35).

"Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38), Mary replied, and thus revealed how the Holy Spirit acts in her. There is no trace in her of the original "non serviam". The original temptation to become "a god in opposition to God" is totally alien to her. Precisely for this reason she could become the Mother of the Son of God and, becoming such, she can help all men to be adopted sons and daughters through Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1:5).

## Immaculate Conception

O Father,  
you prepared the Virgin Mary  
to be the worthy mother  
of your Son.  
...Help us by her prayers,  
to live in your presence  
without sin.

### ***Will Christmas be Outlawed in America Again?***

The Puritans, including the group of them who came from England to our Plymouth shores, known as Pilgrims, banned Christmas. This was due to their intense hostility towards the “Romish Church,” and the Church of England, charged with following “popish” practices.

Christmas was banned in England for eleven years by Act of Parliament (1659), during the ascendancy of Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan party. In New England, Christmas was banned for twenty-two years by the Great and General Court of Massachusetts (the legislature).

Pilgrim Children were not allowed to have a Santa Claus, a Christmas tree, or a vacation from school on Christmas day. Adults were not allowed to feast, to dance, or to refrain from work on the 25th day of December. Such actions were punishable by fine or imprisonment. The Pilgrims boasted that they worked on Christmas.

Samuel Sewall, famous for the diary he kept, noted in his chronicle, covering the years 1623-1729, many of the hostile acts against the observance of Christmas. He recorded with satisfaction the number of stores open on Christmas days and the carts coming to town. “Some,” he says, “somehow, observe the day, but are vexed, I believe, that the body of the people profane it; and blessed be God!”

Cotton Mather and other leaders of the Pilgrims pronounced as “blasphemy” the keeping of “Holy Days.” They resented the forms of English celebrations, which, no doubt, fell at times to the level of boisterous revelry that were a discredit to religion. They wanted no “wanton Bacchanalian Christmases,” spent “dicing, carding, masking (taking part in a masquerade), mumming (superstitious ceremonies), consumed in compotations (drinking, carousing), in interludes, in excess of wine, in mad mirth.” If they stopped there, the sympathies of most Christians would be on their side. But these dour immigrants to

New England, who were known by their gait, dark clothing, lank hair, and sour demeanor, did not want any merry-making at Christmas whatsoever, for they hated all things Catholic, as the Devil hates holy water. Because of their Puritanical hatred of Christmas, Thanksgiving was made a prominent holiday. All the usual foods associated with Christmas in “Merri England” were rejected in favor of the indigenous turkey, Indian pudding, and pumpkin pie. Christmas carols were tabooed. In England the anti-Catholic feeling against the “popish” practice of celebrating Christmas culminated in the Roundhead (Puritan) Parliament (1643) abolishing saints’ days, Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. They even went so far as to destroy Holly and Mistletoe plants associated with Christmas, claiming that such plants were of the Evil One.

The enemies of the greatest Christian feast of the year attacked these and many more innocent joys, merely because they were of Catholic origin. Cromwell and his Puritans in England and on this side of the Atlantic are no more. On the other hand, the Church and the holy feast of Christmas continues to flourish in certain circles and do honor to the Babe of Bethlehem on December 25 of each year.

While Christmas is no longer banned in America or England, it is under serious attack, not only by modern paganistic and commercializing practices, but by the Anti-Christian left doing everything they can to remove all semblance of Christmas from our society.

Christmas is under attack because it is associated with Christianity--the very spiritual heritage upon which this nation was founded. The end game is to separate America from America's Christian heritage and history. No court has ever ruled that the Constitution requires government officials to censor Christmas carols, eliminate all references to Christmas, or silence those who celebrate Christ's birth." Christmas is about Christ, despite what any Grinch might say.

### ***What Must I do to be Saved?***

Many Christians believe that when Jesus died on the Cross he paid the ultimate price for all of man's sins and therefore nothing is required of us except making a “personal commitment to a personal savior.”

“Jesus said to them, ...“For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40).

What an extraordinary promise — Believe in Him and we will have eternal life.

But, what does it mean to truly believe in Him? Does it not mean that we must believe that everything

He said is true? Does it not mean that we must be in total submission to His will in our lives? Does it not mean that we must obey His every command?

Many Christians believe that when Jesus died on the Cross He paid the ultimate price for all of man's sins and therefore nothing is required of us except making a "personal commitment to a personal savior." Let's take a more in-depth look at what the New Testament Scriptures teach on this subject.

### **Belief is necessary.**

Rom. 10:9, "Because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

### **We must do God's will.**

Matt 7:21, "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

### **We must obey Jesus.**

John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him."

### **Baptism is necessary for salvation.**

John 3:5, "Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." See also: Mark 16:16; Titus 3:5-8.

### **We must also love God completely and our neighbor as ourselves.**

Luke 10: 25-28, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live."

### **We must keep the Commandments.**

John 14:15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." See also: Matt. 19:16-17.

### **Good works are necessary for salvation.**

Romans 2:7, "For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life." See also: James 2:14,26; Phil 2:12.

### **We must hold out to the end.**

2 Tim 2:12-13, "If we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful-- for he cannot deny himself." See also: Mark 13: 13; 1 Cor 10:12, 27.

### **We must also eat His body and drink His blood.**

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is

drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever." (John 53-59).

Would Jesus command us to do something impossible? Jesus would have had to have made some provision for His followers to carry out the command to "eat His flesh and drink His blood".

One of the fundamental differences between Catholics and the hundreds of different denominations is how the above verses are understood.

Isn't it true that all Christians are taught to interpret the Bible literally, except where the use of symbolic or figurative language is obvious? So the issue is: "Did Jesus really mean that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood?"

"The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (John 6:52).

The fact that the Jews questioned the words of Jesus tells us that they understood Jesus' words literally.

The Catholic Church has always taught that Jesus was speaking literally, and this can it be proved by the Bible and Church history.

Let us begin with the creation story in Genesis 1:1-31: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day."

*God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*

And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. *And it was so.*

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." *And it was so.*

And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth." *And it was so.*

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." *And it was so.*

Everything God said came to pass.

"So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is the Word, and the Word was and is God (John 1:1).

As God, Jesus performed numerous miracles. He cured the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the deaf to hear, and raised people from the dead. Whatever He declared came to pass.

Jesus declared that His flesh is real food: "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" *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed"* (Jn. 6:51; 53-55).

During the Last Supper, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you" (Lk. 22:19-20).

Who, *not what*, was Jesus holding in His sacred hands at that moment? He was holding Himself! At that moment, the bread became His Body, simply because He said it was His Body.

He then took a cup of wine and declared it to be His Blood.

Once again, Jesus held Himself in His own hands! At that moment, the wine became His Blood, simply because He said it was so.

I repeat, As soon as he declared the bread and wine to be His Body and Blood, they became His Body and Blood. As you may know, Catholics call this food Eucharist.

He then commanded His disciples to do the same, "Do this in remembrance of me", thereby empowering them to do so. This was the beginning of the New Covenant Priesthood.

St. Paul was certainly a believer in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist:

And St. Paul said, "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. 10:16-17).

And St. Paul said, "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" (1 Cor. 11:27).

**And the Early Church Fathers said!**

Ignatius of Antioch was a disciple of the Apostle John for over thirty years, before suffering a martyr's death in the arena in Rome.

And St. Ignatius of Antioch said, "Pay close attention to those who have wrong notions about the grace of Jesus Christ, which has come to us, and note how at variance they are with God's mind. They care nothing about love: they have no concern for widows or orphans, for the oppressed, for those in prison or released, for the hungry or the thirsty. They hold aloof from the Eucharist and from services of prayer, because they refuse to admit that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which, in his goodness, the Father raised [from the dead]. Consequently those who wrangle and dispute God's gift face death" (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 6, 19-20, [ca. A. D. 104 / 107]).

And St. Ignatius of Antioch said, "You should regard that Eucharist as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or by someone he authorizes. Where the bishop is present, there let the congregation gather, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church". (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 8, [ca. A. D. 104 / 107]).

And St. Ignatius of Antioch said, "Be careful, then, to observe a single Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and one cup of his blood that makes us one, and one altar, just as there is one bishop along with the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow slaves. In that way whatever you do is in line with God's will" (*Letter to the Philadelphians*, 4, [ca. A. D. 104 / 107]).

And St. Ignatius of Antioch said, "Try to gather together more frequently to celebrate God's Eucharist and to praise him. For when you meet with frequency, Satan's powers are overthrown and his destructiveness is undone by the unanimity of your faith" (*Letter to the Ephesians*, 13, [ca. A. D. 104 / 107]).

#### ***The Teaching:***

"You must not let anyone eat or drink of your Eucharist except those baptized in the Lord's name. For in reference to this the Lord said, 'Do not give what is sacred to dogs'" (*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, Commonly Called the *Didache*, [ca. 70 / 80 A. D.]).

#### **St. Justin Martyr:**

Justin Martyr, an early Church Father (105-165 A. D.) is the first person to furnish us with a complete description of the Eucharistic celebration (c. 150). He speaks of it twice, first in regard to the newly-baptized and secondly in regard to the Sunday celebration.

And St. Justin Martyr said, "But we, after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized [illuminated] person, and for all others in every place, that we may be counted

worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation. Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to ge'noito [so be it]. And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion" (I *Apol.* 65).

Justin goes on to specify that the bread that has been consecrated by the prayer formed from the words of Christ.

"And this food is called among us Eucharisti'a [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn" (I *Apol.* 66).

A second description of the Eucharist complementing the first is found a little later in his *Apology* with regard to the Sunday liturgy.

"And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts

to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration" (I *Apol.* 67).

### **St. Irenaeus of Lyons**

And St. Irenaeus of Lyons said, "And just as the wooden branch of the vine, placed in the earth, bears fruit in its own time-and as the grain of wheat, falling into the ground and there dissolved, rises with great increase by the Spirit of God, who sustains all things, and then by the wisdom of God serves for the use of men, and when it receives the Word of God becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ-so also our bodies which are nourished by it, and then fall into the earth and are dissolved therein, shall rise at the proper time, the Word of God bestowing on them this rising again, to the glory of God the Father" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, [Inter A. D. 180 / 190]).

It is clear from the words of Jesus, St. Paul, and the Early Church Fathers that Jesus meant it when He said that we must eat His body and drink His blood.

There is an avalanche of evidence in support of the Catholic understanding and absolutely none to support the Protestant contention. Jesus was not speaking symbolically. The only refutation offered by Protestantism is opinion, as no proof exists.

To be fully Christian is to believe in these words of Jesus and *come home* to the Catholic Church. There is no greater intimacy than eating His flesh and drinking his blood.

Jesus came that we may have life, and have it abundantly. This can only be fully experienced in the Catholic Church.