

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

The Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ are made truly present in the Eucharist.

“It has always been the conviction of the Church of God...that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.” (CCC 1376)

Christ is present in many ways in his Church. The Catechism teaches that Christ is present:

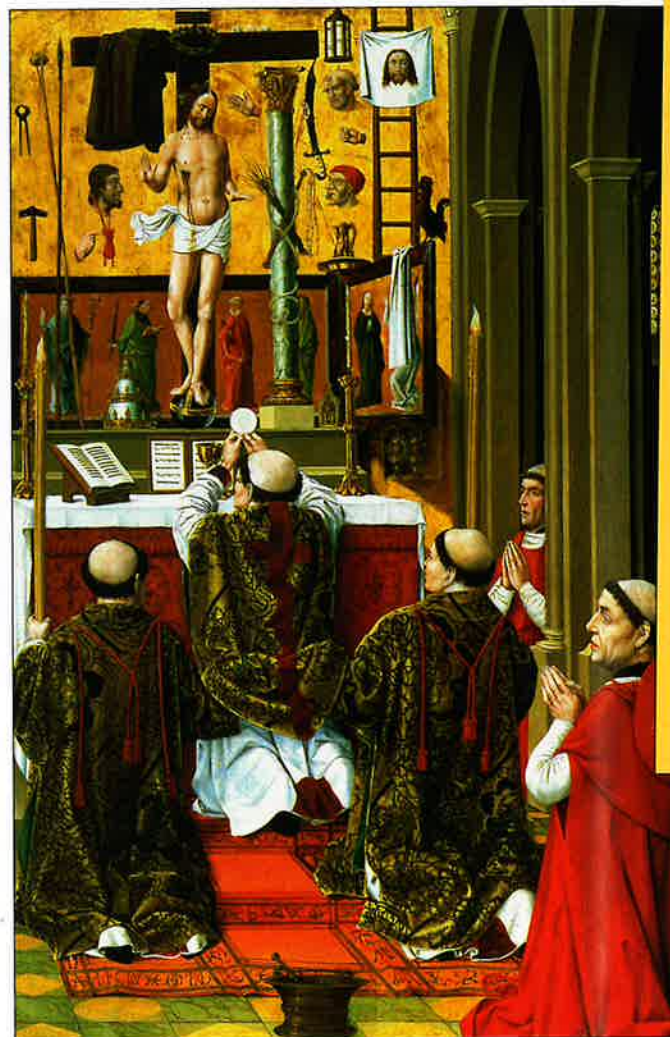
- ✦ in his Word.
- ✦ in the Liturgy.
- ✦ in the Sacraments, which he instituted.
- ✦ in the poor, the sick and the imprisoned (see CCC 1373).

However, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is distinctive. The substance (nature or essence) of the bread and wine, by the power of the Holy Spirit, becomes the substance of the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ, i.e., the whole Christ. This change is called **transubstantiation**. The appearances (which are traditionally called “accidents”) of the bread and wine remain (color, taste, texture, and so on), while only the substance is changed.

The Eucharist is called the **Real Presence** because the fullness of Christ’s presence resides in this Sacrament. The consecrated gifts are no longer bread and wine, despite what they look, taste, or feel like. They are the ultimate gift, the Body and Blood of Christ.

Because the Eucharist is truly the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ, we adore it and treat it with the utmost respect.

Adoration is reserved for God alone—it is man’s acknowledgement that he is a creature and that God is the Creator. In **Eucharistic adoration**, we adore Christ, the God-man, in the Eucharist. During Eucharistic adoration, the host is placed in a special vessel called a **monstrance**, which allows adorers to view the Eucharistic host.



The Mass of St. Gregory.

The substance (nature or essence) of the bread and wine, by the power of the Holy Spirit, becomes the substance of the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ, i.e., the whole Christ.

Many parishes offer perpetual adoration where the Eucharist is exposed for twenty-four hours a day to be worshiped and adored. Parishes that offer this are a great gift because the faithful can visit Christ any time throughout the day or night.

Every Catholic church has a **tabernacle** where the Eucharist is reserved. Sometimes it is behind or near the altar, and other times it is in a side chapel that is suited to adoration. Catholics genuflect toward the tabernacle when entering or leaving a church. This outward expression of reverence shows our belief that Christ is truly present in the tabernacle.

Outside of Mass the faithful are invited to spend time with Christ present in the Eucharist. We as Catholics should make visiting Christ in the Blessed Sacrament a priority.

APOLOGETICS 101:

CHRIST’S REAL PRESENCE IN THE EUCHARIST

(Adapted from the *Didache Bible*)

How is Christ truly present in the Eucharist?

Jesus said to [the Jews], “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...For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” (Jn 6:53-55)

[Jesus] took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” (Lk 22:19)

The Church teaches that Jesus Christ is truly, really, and substantially present—in his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—in the Eucharist. The bread and wine consecrated by the bishop or priest in the Mass become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Church has always recognized Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist. Christ’s words in instituting this Sacrament at the Last Supper were unequivocal: “This is my body...This is my blood” (Lk 22:19-20). In the Eucharist “the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained*” (Council of Trent). St. Paul condemns the unworthy reception of the Eucharist as a profanation of the very Body and Blood of Christ (see 1 Cor 11:27-29). Already in the fourth century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem exhorted, “Do not see in the bread and wine merely natural elements, because the Lord has expressly said that they are his Body and his Blood: faith assures you of this, though your senses suggest otherwise” (*Mystagogical Catecheses*, IV).

This change in the Eucharistic species in which the substance of the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ is called *transubstantiation*. It occurs at the consecration during the Mass, when the bishop or priest pronounces the *words of consecration* over the bread and wine as Christ commanded.

In the Eucharist Christ remains truly and totally present under the appearances of bread and wine. He offers his Body and Blood to us in Holy Communion to be nourished by his divine life. The Eucharist is, therefore, not merely a symbol of Christ’s presence but also the active presence of Christ himself, who gives himself to us unconditionally so our lives might be united to his intimately. The Eucharist is “the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend” (*Summa Theologica* III, 73, 3c).

WHAT THE SAINTS SAY ABOUT EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

There is more sweetness in one hour of prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament than in all the world’s crowded theaters, and brilliant drawing rooms, and giddy diversions, and social gatherings. (St. Gabriel Possenti)

Whenever I go to the chapel, I put myself in the presence of our good Lord, and I say to him, “Lord, I am here. Tell me what you would have me to do.”...And then, I tell God everything that is in my heart. I tell him about my pains and my joys, and then I listen. If you listen, God will also speak to you, for with the good Lord, you have to both speak and listen. God always speaks to you when you approach him plainly and simply. (St. Catherine Laboure)

If we truly knew how to appreciate it [the Holy Eucharist], it alone would fortify and sustain us. (St. Theodore Guerin)

