

CELEBRATING THE REAL PRESENCE

“Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us,’ is present in many ways to his Church:¹⁹⁷ in his word, in his Church’s prayer, ‘where two or three are gathered in my name,’¹⁹⁸ in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned,¹⁹⁹ in the sacraments of which he is the author, in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the minister. But he is present . . . most especially in the Eucharistic species.”²⁰⁰

The mode of Christ’s presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as ‘the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend.’²⁰¹ In the most blessed sacrament of 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.*²⁰² ‘This presence is called “real”—by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be “real” too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.’²⁰³

It is by the conversion of the bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood that Christ becomes present in this sacrament. The Church Fathers strongly affirmed the faith of the Church in the efficacy of the Word of Christ and of the action of the Holy Spirit to bring about this conversion. Thus St. John Chrysostom declares:

It is not man that causes the things offered to become the Body and Blood of Christ, but he who was crucified for us, Christ himself. The priest, in the role of Christ, pronounces these words, but their power and grace are God’s. This is my body, he says. This word transforms the things offered.²⁰⁴

And St. Ambrose says about this conversion:

Be convinced that this is not what nature has formed, but what the blessing has consecrated. The power of the blessing prevails over that of nature, because by the blessing nature itself is changed. . . . Could not Christ’s word, which can make from nothing what did not exist, change existing things into what they were not before? It is no less a feat to give things their original nature than to change their nature.²⁰⁵

The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: ‘Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, 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.’²⁰⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1373-1376*

¹⁹⁷ Rom 8:34; cf. LG 48.

¹⁹⁸ Mt 18:20.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Mt 25:31-46.

²⁰⁰ SC 7.

²⁰¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh III*, 73, 3c.

²⁰² Council of Trent (1551): DS 1651.

²⁰³ Paul VI, *MF* 39.

²⁰⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *prod. Jud.* 1:6: PG 49, 380.

²⁰⁵ St. Ambrose, *De myst.* 9, 50; 52: PL 16, 405-407.

²⁰⁶ Council of Trent (1551): DS 1642; cf. Mt 26:26 ff.; Mk 14:22 ff.; Lk 22:19 ff.; 1 Cor 11:24 ff.

What Did You Learn About Celebrating the Real Presence?

for younger saints

You can offer “flowers” to Jesus like Saint Terese did. List three ways you can do it.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
4. When you receive Holy Communion,
 - a. Jesus comes to live inside you.
 - b. you get a good snack during Mass.
 - c. you get a very special food for your soul.
5. We know that Jesus is *really* the Bread and Wine of Communion because
 - a. His face is printed on each Host.
 - b. He told us that He would be there.
6. The most important part of our life as Catholics is
 - a. getting donuts after Mass.
 - b. going to *Family Formation*.
 - c. our faith in the Holy Eucharist.
7. Recite your memory verse.

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Quiz Answers

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1.—3. Answers will vary, but should be some small sacrifices or acts of kindness that they do cheerfully and offer to Jesus.

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7. Recite your memory verse.

“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me.” Matthew 25:35

What Did You Learn About Celebrating the Real Presence?

for older saints

Match the words with their definitions

1. catacombs	_____
2. transubstantiation	_____
3. Eucharist	_____
4. consecration	_____
5. Communion	_____

a. the part of Mass where we go forward to receive Jesus
b. the changing of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus
c. underground cemeteries
d. This is called the source and summit of our lives.
e. the part of a Mass where the bread and wine are changed into Jesus

6. You can prepare to receive Jesus in Holy Communion by

- a. fasting for at least one hour.
- b. having a snack on the way to Mass.
- c. receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation.

7. Jesus may have decided to be Communion bread because

- a. bread feeds us and helps our bodies grow strong just as Jesus feeds us to help our spirits grow strong.
- b. bread is something almost all people are familiar with.
- c. bread is cheap enough that everyone can afford it.
- d. bread has everything you need to stay alive.

8. Recite The Corporal Works of Mercy.

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for older saints

Quiz Answers

Match the words with their definitions

1. catacombs	<u>c</u>
2. transubstantiation	<u>b</u>
3. Eucharist	<u>d</u>
4. consecration	<u>e</u>
5. Communion	<u>a</u>

- a. the part of Mass where we go forward to receive Jesus
- b. the changing of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus
- c. underground cemeteries
- d. This is called the source and summit of our lives.
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8. Recite The Corporal Works of Mercy.

The Corporal Works of Mercy: Feed the hungry. Give drink to the thirsty. Shelter the homeless. Clothe the naked. Visit the sick. Visit the imprisoned. Bury the dead. (See *Matthew 25:31-46* and *CCC 2447*.)