

# **Beginning Apologetics – The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist**

## **The Biblical Basis for The Real Presence?**

**February 21, 2010**

**“Learn to explain our faith *clearly*, to defend it *charitably*, and to share it *confidently*.”**

**1 Peter 3:15: “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.”**

### **I. Opening Prayer: Anima Christi**

### **II. Review – What does the Church teach?**

**A. Source/Summit, Sum/Summary**

**B. For 2000 years, the Church has taught that Jesus Christ is really and truly present in the Eucharist.**

**C. When is Christ present in the Eucharistic elements?**

- 1. His presence begins at the moment of consecration (“This is My Body...This is My Blood”)**
- 2. His presence lasts as long as the appearances of bread and wine remain.**

### **III. The Eucharist Fulfilled in the New Testament**

**A. John 6: The Eucharist Promised**

- 1. This is the **CLEAREST EXPRESSION** of the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Bible**
- 2. There are two, interconnected themes in John 6:**
  - a) *Jesus’ teaching about the Eucharist***
  - b) *Jesus discussion about FAITH – esp. the faith needed to accept His difficult teaching about the EUCHARIST***

3. In John 6, Jesus teaches CLEARLY that we must consume His flesh and blood AS FOOD:

a) *John 6:51 – “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.”*

b) *John 6: 53 – “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*

c) *John 6:55 – “For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.*

## B. Handling Objections to the Catholic interpretation of John 6

a) *Isn't he just speaking figuratively?*

(1) No! Eating one's flesh is a specific metaphor for being persecuted, assaulted and destroyed.

(2) See chart on pg. 13 for examples.

(3) This figurative interpretation makes NONSENSE of the statement!

b) *John 6:35 as a metaphor for Jesus spiritually nourishing us*

(1) Of course He meant spiritual nourishment. But He doesn't STOP at verse 35.

(2) Starting with verse 51, and for six consecutive verses, Jesus tells us PLAINLY that the bread he's referring to is *His FLESH*.

(3) Jesus *equates* the flesh we must eat for eternal life with the flesh offered on the cross.

(4) Either they are both figurative...or they are both *literal*. Was it Christ's *figurative* flesh offered on the cross? Nope.

(5) Our personal preference doesn't matter: Christ's *clear words* are what we must believe!

c) *In John 6:60- 70, doesn't Jesus explain that he was only speaking figuratively? (vs. 63: “It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh <sup>22</sup> is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”*

(1) No!

- (2) His Eucharistic discourse ENDS at verse 58! (verse 59: "These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. "
- (3) Vv 60 – 70 occur *later*, and they focus on *faith*.
- (4) The word "spirit" does NOT mean "symbolic"; the spiritual is as real as the physical!
- (5) Vs. 63 is a contrast between the natural or *carnal* man (the flesh) and the spiritual/faith-filled man .
- (6) Contrast between the "The Flesh" and "The Spirit" in Scripture:

Matt 26:41

John 3:6

Galatians 5:13-26

Romans 7: 5-6, 25

Galatians 3:3, Galatians 4:29

Romans 13:14

- (7) When Jesus discusses the Eucharist, He says, “MY flesh”.
- (8) When Jesus discusses the carnal man who will not believe Him, He says “THE flesh”.
- (9) Go back to John 6:63: “It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”
- (10) Does *anyone* believe that Jesus’ flesh was “of no avail”? No! It was the means of our salvation!
- (11) Most telling: When did the disciples who left...*leave*?  
**Verse 66! *Why would they leave if Jesus explained away this “hard saying”?***

### C. The Last Supper: The Promise Fulfilled

1. This is where Jesus fulfills His promise to give us His literal flesh and blood as food and drink!
2. To believe in the Real Presence is simply to *take Jesus at His word*. If He declares it, then it is!
  - a) *God created light just by speaking the words.*
  - b) *Jesus cured the royal official’s son (John 4:46-53) by speaking the words.*
3. Jesus had worked every kind of miracle imaginable in order to convince his Apostles of His power.
4. He had done everything He could to prepare them to accept His declarations, no matter how extraordinary
5. Repeating John 6, Jesus **EQUATES** His body and blood in the Eucharist with His body and blood sacrificed on the cross

Luke 22:19

Matthew 26:28

6. We echo this in the Eucharistic Prayers; *listen* to the words of Consecration when you're in Mass next time!

7. Jesus identifies the body and blood He gives at the Last Supper as the SAME BODY AND BLOOD He will sacrifice on Calvary. If we accept the Cross as literal, we MUST accept the Eucharist as literal!

#### D. Handling Objections to the Catholic Interpretation of The Last Supper

1. Jesus calls Himself a "vine" (John 15:1) and a "door" (John 10:9). Can't we suppose He is likewise speaking figuratively when He says, "This is my body; this is my blood"?

a) *NO.*

b) *The comparison is obvious when Jesus speaks in these two places; He IS like a vine which gives life to all its branches, and He IS like a door through which all must come who seek salvation.*

c) *But how is Jesus' body like a piece of bread? How is His blood like wine?*

d) *Everything about the Last Supper suggests He is speaking literally:*

- (1) John 6
- (2) Solemnity of the occasion
- (3) Straight talk
- (4) Lack of figurative comparison

e) *His grammar is different here:*

- (1) "I am the vine" CANNOT be literally true (a man cannot BE a plant).
- (2) Jesus DID NOT say "BREAD is my Body" (a contradiction); He said, "*This* is my body" as He held up the bread.
- (3) His words effected the change He intended: they changed the *substance* of what He was holding into the *substance* of His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity!

2. If the Apostles consumed Jesus' real body and blood, wouldn't they be committing cannibalism? And wouldn't this violate the biblical prohibition against drinking blood?

- a) *No. Remember, this is why the unbelieving disciples left in John 6. They thought he meant cannibalism!*
- b) *The believing disciples were rewarded when Jesus revealed at the Last Supper that they would receive His true body and blood SACRAMENTALLY.*
- c) *In the sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus is truly present, but with their normal physical properties \*changed\* (normal condition is hidden under the appearance of bread and wine).*
- d) *They weren't committing cannibalism because Christ wasn't in His natural condition.*
- e) *They received Christ whole and entire – body, blood, soul, and divinity, under the appearance of bread and wine.*
- f) *Receiving Jesus sacramentally has nothing to do with cannibalism*

3. How could Jesus give His body and blood to His disciples and still be in the room? Isn't it impossible for Jesus' body and blood to be in two places at one time?

- a) *It IS mysterious; it ISN'T impossible.*
- b) *Christ was present in two ways:*
  - (1) At the table in a *natural* way;
  - (2) Under the *appearance* of bread and wine *sacramentally*.
- c) *That we can't understand how God does something doesn't mean he CAN'T do it.*
  - (1) The Trinity
  - (2) The Dual Natures of Christ (God/Man)
  - (3) Creation from nothingness
  - (4) God's omnipresence
  - (5) But all these are acceptable Mysteries for all Christians
  - (6) But everyone accepts these mysteries
- d) *A Mystery is defined as a revealed truth that cannot be \*completely\* understood; If we can accept the mystery of Christ's divinity, anything He might teach, no matter how difficult, should be in reach.*

e) *The miracle of the loaves and fishes prepares us to accept the idea of something being multiplied; if Jesus could multiply natural bread, why could He not multiply the presence of His body?*

#### IV. The Witness of St. Paul

##### A. The apostles continued to celebrate the Eucharist in obedience to Christ's command

1. Did they believe they were just passing out bread and wine?
2. Or did they believe they consecrated the actual Body and Blood of Christ?

##### B. What did St. Paul have to say about the Eucharist?

1. 1 Corinthians 10:16 – “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? “
2. Paul says we “participate” in the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.
3. Symbolic bread and wine cannot unite us to Christ's real body and blood; the only way to “participate” is if His body and blood are *really present* in the Eucharist!

##### C. How does St. Paul advise us to approach the Eucharist?

1. 1 Corinthians 11:27 – “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord.”
2. The expression “to answer for the body and blood” of someone means to be guilty of murder.
3. Receiving the Eucharist unworthily makes us guilty of a sacrilege comparable to shedding Christ's blood!
4. This CANNOT be true if we violate someone's SYMBOLIC presence.
  - a) *If I behead a statue of the Pope, I am disrespectful.*
  - b) *If I stomp on a picture of my wife, I am dead, but not guilty of assault*
  - c) *Because: Damaging the symbol DOES NOT damage the Person!*

*d) How can we “answer for the body and blood of the Lord” if His body and blood aren’t really there in the Eucharist?*

5. 1 Corinthians 11: 28-29 – “<sup>28</sup> A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.”

*a) How does this make sense without the Real Presence?*

*b) Paul says we are condemned for not recognizing and acknowledging the body and blood of the Lord.*

*c) IF it’s only a bit of bread and wine, how can we be held accountable?*

*d) The possibility of NOT recognizing Jesus in the Eucharist IMPLIES that He is there to recognize!*

*e) Do WE discern the Body of Christ in the Eucharist? Do our separated brethren and sisters?*

#### **D. Handling objections to the Catholic understanding of Paul’s words**

1. Even after the consecration, Jesus calls the contents of the cup, “the fruit of the vine” (Matt 26:29) and St. Paul continues to call the other element “bread” (1 Cor 11:26, 27, 28). Doesn’t this prove they are still bread and wine?

*a) Uh...No.*

*b) Scripture often calls things by their appearance*

(1) Angels who appear as men are called men (Gen 18:2, 22; Gen 19:1)

(2) The Holy Spirit is described as “tongues of fire descending (Acts 2:3)

*c) Scripture calls things by their former condition*

(1) Aaron’s staff was turned into a serpent, but is still called a staff (Exodus 7:12)

(2) After Jesus cured the man born blind, he is still called “the blind man” (John 9:17)

*d) The angels were still angels, even though they are called men. The blind man was healed, even though he is called “the blind man”*



*e) WE can't argue that the Eucharist isn't the body and blood of our Lord simply because it is sometimes called bread and wine.*

(1) IT still has the *appearance* of bread and wine

(2) It was bread and wine before its consecration

## **V. Final observations**

### **A. Look at all the Scriptural proofs we've covered in this section**

1. They all affirm, in the strongest possible language, the doctrine of the Real Presence

2. Not a single passage of Scripture affirms (or even suggests) the real absence.

3. We have no choice but to accept the clear declarations of God's Word

### **B. Protestant Christians claim to follow the plain sense of Scripture as their only rule.**

1. How can they deny so many clear assertions of the Bible, when not a single verse authorizes them to?

2. Jesus says clearly, "the bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world." (John 6:51)

3. Protestants say, "Oh, it's just a bit of bread."

4. So...who's right?

## **VI. Conclusion**

### **A. Review the class Schedule**

### **B. I expect everyone taking the class to pick four hours over the next 6 weeks to participate in Eucharistic Adoration**

1. Review hours of availability of Adoration

*a) Tue – Thu 1200 – 2230*

*b) First Friday 9:00 am – Saturday 8:00 am*

*c) All Fridays of Lent following Stations of the Cross until the 8:00 am Mass on Saturday*

2. Adoration will count toward credit for the class as far as I am concerned; report your hours, and I will report them to the Office of Catechesis

**C. I would also ask everyone in the class who does not already attend a daily Mass to pick a time and attend at least once a week during the class.**

1. Mass schedule: 6:15 am/8:30 am Mon – Fri, 8:00 am Saturday
2. If you're already doing this, Keep It Up!

## **VII. Closing prayer**