

## **The Eucharist (1/16/15):**

Questions:

### **What does the Church teach the Eucharist is?**

**A:** The Church teaches that Jesus Christ, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, is truly present in the Eucharist. This presence is achieved by transubstantiation, the substance of bread and wine changing into the Body and Blood of Christ, while keeping the appearance and physical characteristics (accidents) of bread and wine.

### **Isn't eating Jesus cannibalism?**

**A:** No, because when a cannibal eats a person, he does so by eating pieces of the body of his victim, damaging and degrading it. But the Body of Jesus remains whole and undamaged when Communion is received, and is not damaged whatsoever. Instead, the person receives Jesus whole, Body and Soul.

### **What did Jesus say about the Eucharist?**

**A:** Jesus talks about the Eucharist twice in the Bible: the Bread of Life discourse in John 6, and the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. The Bread of Life discourse is below:

### **Wasn't Jesus just speaking metaphorically, in the same way as when He said He was a vine or a door?**

**A:** One reason why is that when He said He was a vine and a door, everyone understood it was a metaphor, while in the Bread of Discourse they understand him to be literal. Second, Jesus emphasized the literal nature of His words by using graphic and vivid imagery: one of the verbs He uses most literally means "to chew on" or "to tear with the teeth", which indicates He is trying to emphasize the literal nature of the act. Third, at other times in the Gospels, Jesus does use metaphors that the disciples take literally, but when the disciples are confused, He explains the metaphor to them. Here, however, He repeats and insists on the literal meaning of His words to the crowd and the disciples.

### **What is the importance and reason for Eucharist and why do we consume it?**

**A:** We have Eucharist because Jesus gave it to us. We believe the reason Jesus instituted it is so that it may serve as the memorial of his Passion and Resurrection to the Church. We eat it because he told us to and he said it would give us life. It is important is because it is literally God being sacrificed.

### **Why must the Eucharist be bread and wine, and not potato chips and juice?**

**A:** The Bible makes numerous references, both literal & figurative, to both wheat & grape wine:

"Unless a grain of wheat shall fall..." ----John 12:24 (Paschal Mystery parallel)

Jesus is, and is referred to in the Bible as, the Bread of Life----John 6:35

One Bread, One Body: unity in the Eucharist----1 Cor. 10:17

Breaking and blessing the bread at the Last Supper----Luke 22:19, Matt. 26:26, Mark 14:22

The word "vine" appears frequently: Greek words for "vine" and "grapevine" are the same word

"I am the vine, you are the branches."----John 15:5

Man needs both wheat and "blood of the grape" as essentials----Sirach 39:26

Consecration of the wine into Blood at Last Supper----Luke 22:20, Matt 26:27-29

**Why can't non-Catholics consume the Eucharist?**

**A:** They are not in spiritual communion with fully initiated Catholics. The most relevant part of this separation comes in that they do not believe that the Eucharist is Christ's real presence like practicing Catholics, so they should not partake of the Eucharist because receiving Communion is a profession of the Catholic faith with actions.

**What about for Catholic people who are gluten-intolerant or alcoholics?**

**A:** See: Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, 1994—Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger “Mustum,” or fresh, ripe, grape juice that has been prevented from fermenting by natural means (without changing its identity--so no pasteurization) is allowed for alcoholic priests or in case of a priest with a documented medical reason for being unable to consume even a tiny amount of alcohol

- If condition is known before the person would be ordained, and due to the Eucharist's central importance, the person may not be allowed to be ordained.
- Preferably, it would be a Mass with only distribution of the Precious Body (“per intinctionem”)
- If that priest is celebrating Mass with other priests, one of the other priests would preside so real wine could be used. If a bishop, then the other priests would have real wine.
- Lay people: very rare, must appeal to Rome
- The Eucharist must keep the essence of the bread and wine intact:
  - Gluten: must have enough for the host to still be considered bread
  - In the same way, water should not exceed the amount of wine lest it compromise the identity of the liquid as wine

**What if someone both has celiac disease/gluten intolerance and happens to be allergic to grapes or an alcoholic?**

**A:** Spiritual Communion: prayer for when a person is not physically able to receive communion for some reason but still strongly desires the Lord's presence

**ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION BY ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI (A.D. 1696-1787)**

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things and I desire You in my soul. Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though thou were already there, I embrace You and unite myself wholly to You; permit not that I should ever be separated from You. ([http://www.rc.net/stcloud/sacredheart/instruction\\_spiritual\\_communion.html](http://www.rc.net/stcloud/sacredheart/instruction_spiritual_communion.html))