

## *The Eucharist Made Present*

### **Q. 239. What takes place when a priest speaks the words of Eucharistic consecration?**

When a priest pronounces the words of Eucharistic consecration at Mass, the bread and wine, by the power of the Holy Spirit, are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, which were given for us in sacrifice.

At the Last Supper, Jesus' words and power made Him really and substantially present under the outward appearances of bread and wine which He gave the Apostles to eat; so, they actually received Jesus in that meal and were united with Him. This made the Apostles one with our Lord and all that He did. They shared in both His gift of Himself to His Father on the Cross and in the Father's gift of life to Jesus in the Resurrection. Later, the Apostles gave Jesus Christ to the People of God in the Holy Eucharist.

In the celebration of the Mass, the Church re-creates the Last Supper by bringing followers of Jesus together and recalling, through readings and prayers, what God has done for His people. Then the priest repeats what Jesus said at the Last Supper, and himself gives the consecrated bread and wine, which is now Jesus' Body and Blood, to the people.

Many Protestants object to the Catholic priesthood, claiming that it counters what is written in the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews. The passage referred to says: "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet." (Hebrews 10:10-13).

How does the Catholic Church interpret these words? The Catholic Church teaches that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass does not involve Christ's death for us anew. Rather, it is a participation in the one sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, in an unbloody manner, the benefits of which continue into eternity. Jesus continually lives to make intercession for us, offering to the Father, on our behalf, Himself, given for us on the Cross.

"But he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:24-25).

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*For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.*

Every ordained Catholic priest participates in the one priesthood of Christ, which alone can take away the sins of the world. When the priest pronounces the words of Eucharistic consecration, he is said to do so *in persona Christi*, that is, in the person of Christ. It is really Christ speaking through the words of His priest, when the priest says, “This is my body,” and “This is my blood.” The Old Testament sacrifices could never take away sins, but the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross can. We participate in this sacrifice when we participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass over which an ordained priest presides.

#E4\_5-2



### ***Sacred Scripture***

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.” The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” 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.” *John 6:51-53*

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 Corinthians 10:16*

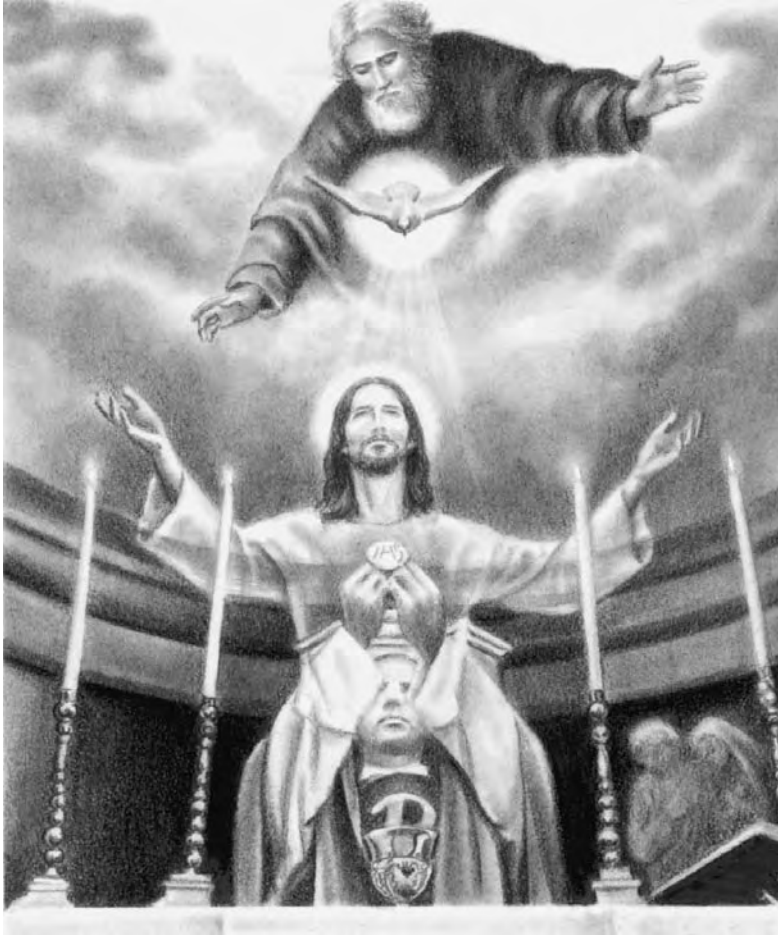
### ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***

**1377** The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Vatican Council II***

“[Christ] is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister,” the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross, “but especially in the eucharistic species.” *Sacred Liturgy*, 7

#E4\_5-3



### **Q. 240. How is Jesus present in the Eucharist?**

Our Lord Jesus Himself, true God and true man, is really and substantially present, in a mysterious way, under the appearances of bread and wine.

After the priest speaks the words of consecration, the appearances of bread and wine remain, meaning that bread and wine appear to be there but are not really there substantially. At the Last Supper, when our Lord gave the Apostles His Body, the Body looked and tasted like bread, though it was not bread; it was His Body, for He said so. When our Lord gave the Apostles His Blood, the Blood appeared to be wine and tasted like wine, though it was not wine; it was His Blood, for He said so.

The Holy Eucharist looks like bread and tastes like bread, but it is not bread; it is Jesus. To come to us, Jesus covers Himself with the appearances of bread and wine. Although we cannot understand this, we take the word of God that it is so.

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*For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.*

**Catechism of the Catholic Church**

Q. 240. Paragraphs 1373-1381.

We have such belief in God, Who is all-truthful, that we believe all that He said about the Holy Eucharist. Therefore, the Eucharist is called a Mystery of Faith.

All Catholic priests have the power to change bread and wine into Christ. In the Eucharist, it is Jesus Himself Who consecrates through the priest as the words of consecration are said: “This is my body... This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant...”

### ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***

**1374** 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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.”<sup>2</sup> “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.”<sup>3</sup>

### ***Roman Curia Document***

For even in the reserved sacrament [Christ] is to be adored because He is substantially present there through the conversion of bread and wine which, as the Council of Trent tells us, is most aptly named transubstantiation. *Instruction on Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, Sacred Congregation of Rites, May 25, 1967, Introduction, 48*

### ***Summary Prayer***

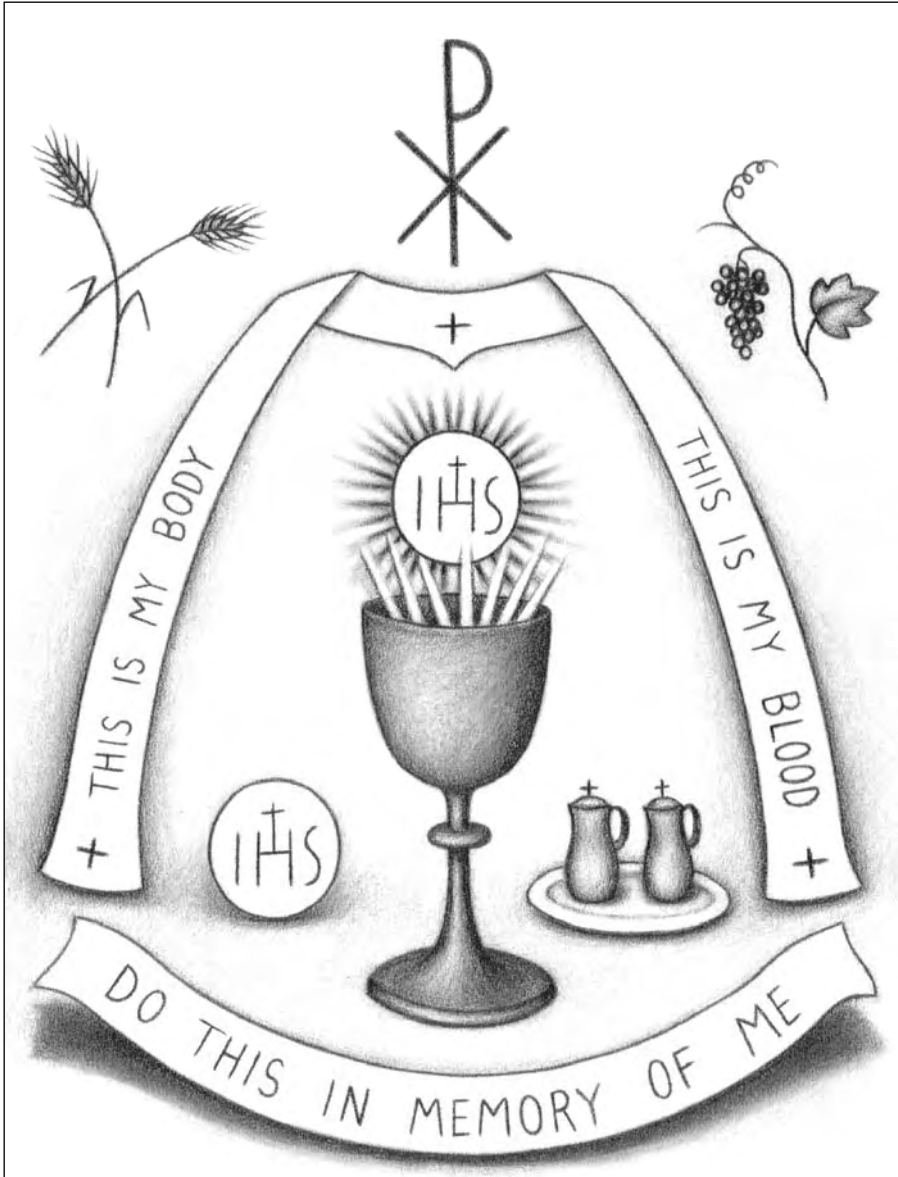
*Father, Almighty God, You teach us, in both the Old and the New Testaments, to celebrate the Passover mystery of the Eucharist in the Mass. Help us to understand Your great love for us. May the goodness You now show us confirm our hope in Your future mercy. May we celebrate the Eucharist with reverence and love, for when we proclaim the death of the Lord, You continue the work of His redemption. All glory and praise be to You, to Your divine Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.*

### ***Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise*** (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. What happens during the consecration of the Mass when the priest says over the bread and wine, “This is my body... This is my blood”?
2. The Eucharist is called a Mystery of Faith. Jesus is truly and sacramentally present in the Eucharist. How can you show your faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist?
3. Each time you attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, offer fervent acts of faith and adoration to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, especially during the Consecration of the bread and wine and at Holy Communion.

**Catechism by Diagram**

#E4-33



**Words of Consecration.** When a priest (stole) pronounces the words of Eucharistic consecration (words) in the Person, and through the authority, of Jesus Christ (monogram), the underlying realities of bread (wheat) and wine (grapes) are changed into the Body (host) and Blood (chalice) of Christ (IHS—Latin for Jesus Savior of men), which was given for us in sacrifice. That change is called “transubstantiation.” This means that Christ Himself, true God and true man, is really and substantially present, in a mysterious way, under the appearances of bread and wine.



### **Chapter Summary Prayer**

*God our Father, at Mass we gather to share in the supper which Your only Son left to His Church to reveal His love. He gave it to us when He was about to die, and commanded us to celebrate it as the new and eternal Sacrifice of the Mass. He offered Himself as a Victim for our deliverance and taught us to make this offering in His memory. As we eat His Body which He gave for us, we grow in strength. As we drink His Blood which He poured out for us, we are washed clean.*

*At the Last Supper, as Jesus sat at table with His Apostles, He offered Himself to You, His heavenly Father, as the spotless Lamb, the acceptable gift that gives Him perfect praise. He has given us this memorial of His Passion to bring us its saving power until the end of time.*

*In this great sacrament Jesus feeds us, His people, and strengthens us in holiness, so that we, the family of mankind, may come to walk in the light of one Faith, in one communion of love.*

*We come then to this wonderful sacrament to be fed at Your table, Father, and to grow into Your likeness. Earth unites with heaven to sing the new song of creation as we adore and praise You in this Sacrament of Divine Love. Amen.*

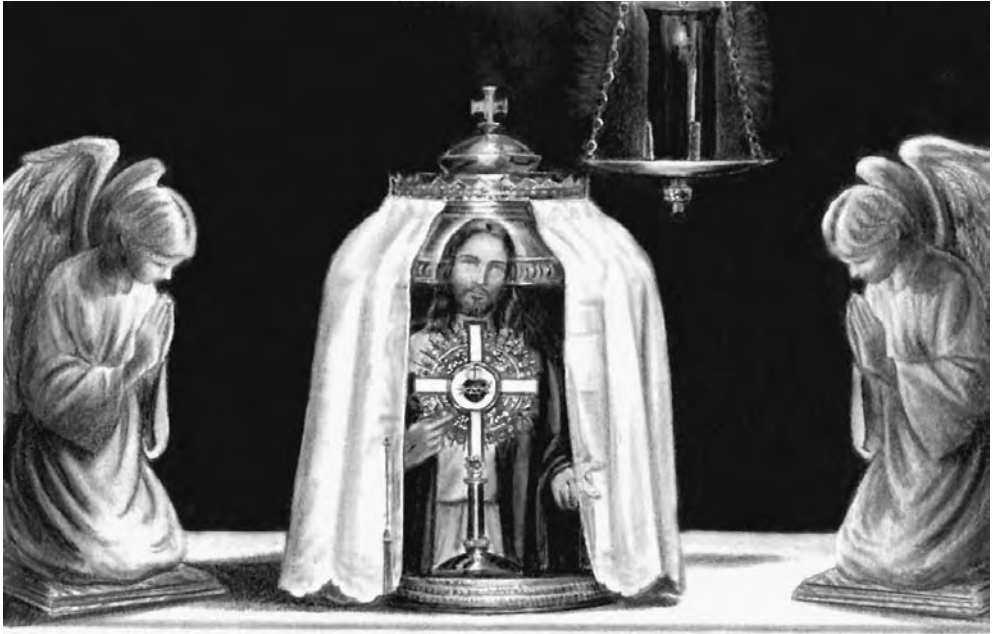
**Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 67***See Appendix A for more references.***Q. 239. What takes place when a priest speaks the words of Eucharistic consecration?**

*Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 10, 11, 17, 26-28;*  
*On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 4, 5, 15, 16;*  
*On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 2, 8-9;*  
*On Social Concern, John Paul II, sect. 48;*  
*Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6, 47-58.*

**Q. 240. How is Jesus present in the Eucharist?**

*On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 1-5, 9, 11;*  
*On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 9;*  
*The Relationship Between Faith and Reason, John Paul II, sect. 13;*  
*Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6, 47-58.*

#E4\_6-2

**Thought Provokers***Please see Appendix C for the answers.*

- Q. 239: Many Protestants object to the Catholic priesthood in the belief that it counters what is written in the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews. The passage referred to says: “We are sanctified through the offering of the Body of Christ once for all. And every [Old Testament high] priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man [Jesus], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:10–13). How does the Catholic Church interpret these words?
- Q. 240: When we receive Holy Communion, do we receive only the Body of Christ when we do not drink the Precious Blood from the chalice or cup?