

What Christians Believed From the Very Beginning

This is some philosophy and theology boiled down as simply as I could — almost dangerously simplified — and put in a small space...

From the start of Christianity, those who believed in Jesus as the Messiah understood that the Eucharist is not a mere symbol but the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ present as a “sacrament”. Of course, Jesus Himself tells us in the Gospel of John 6 that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood.

In 1 Corinthians 10: 16 we read, “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?”

In the year 150, St. Justin said, “This food we call the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true...[we receive] as Jesus Christ...the food consecrated by the word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by being renewed, is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus.”

In the Eucharist, Jesus, speaking in the person of the priest says, “This is my body...this is my blood.” The Catholic Church calls this *transubstantiation*. Transubstantiation is the changing of one substance for another. Let’s see if we can simplify the definition a bit.

There are two words in the word “transubstantiation.” The first word is “trans.” It means “through,” so in this usage “trans” means *change*; to move through. The second word in “transubstantiation” is “substance.” This can be tricky because that word comes with a lot of philosophical baggage. In a simple sense, the word “substance” means the unifying core of a thing that makes the thing what it is. For example the substance of bread would be its *breadness*. It could be dark or light, sweet or sour, hard or soft but it is something potentially

nutritious and edible and *bready*.

The substance of the famous composer Ludwig von Beethoven is the whole distinctive, artistic, loving, and deep-thinking person he is and was. When Beethoven lost his hearing, he did not lose any of the substance of Beethoven-ness — he was still fully his whole distinctive self. He maintained the substance of what it meant to be Beethoven. Our eyes can never see the substance of a thing; it is an inner core reality of the thing.

The size, the color, the shape, the smell of bread — or even of Beethoven! — could all change, but the core reality of what makes it what it is remains the same. The smell, shape and color are what philosophers call “accidents.” Accidental qualities are changeable qualities of a thing. Accidental qualities are perceived by our senses but *they do not make a thing what it is*: bread could even be blue with food coloring, but it is still bread.

Beethoven was not *less* a person without his hearing.

Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. Christians believe that God without limit in time or space condescended to submit to the limits of time and space just like His creatures in order to communicate His divine *Be-ing* more perfectly and intimately to the human race. This itself is an unfathomable miracle.

The Eucharist is the enduring physical presence of Jesus that He willed to leave us. It is an extension of Jesus’ body. In the Eucharist, the whole substance of the bread is changed into the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our senses tell us the truth about what we receive in the Eucharist: in what *appears* to be bread is roundness, whiteness and taste. The same for the wine: there *appears* to be redness of liquid and odor of wine. But only this *appearance* remains.

God supports the appearances or the *accidents* of what was once bread while He changes the substance.

In other words, God *preserves* the existence of the shape and taste and smell of bread. But the *substance* — the inner reality of the bread which we don’t see with our eyes is replaced with the divine Being — the flesh of Jesus Christ. The substance is *changed*. The *accidents* of bread and wine — the appearances — exist without a *subject* in which to exist. Instead, the subject of the existence of the accidents is the divine person, Jesus Christ. Jesus is really physically present in a *sacramental* mode (not as in the original flesh and blood He took as a man on earth).

Our Lord did not want us to see the Eucharist as only a symbol of the body of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to understand a miracle. I only hope in this short page, to illuminate the mystery by showing its rationality in philosophical categories. (We know that if God wanted to do this miracle, He certainly could — and He does.)

I only attempted to shed some *elementary* light on “transubstantiation.” To learn more about this awesome mystery of faith we must do

the necessary study. You can’t love what you don’t know.

Probing minds will want to begin to read the metaphysical theology that informed the so-called Fathers of the Church like St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Augustine and many others. Praying before the Eucharist is a privileged way of praying.


If we understood the Eucharist properly, than we would try to make it the focus of our life; that for which we live and die. In his last encyclical, St. Pope John Paul II said we need to rekindle a “Eucharistic amazement” of this infinite gift. I hope to nudge us toward that deeper appreciation by these thoughts. *Peace!—Fr. Gerald*

In the Eucharist, the whole substance of the bread is changed into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord



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“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.”

— Jesus said this in the Gospel of John 6: 53



This Thursday is the anniversary beginning of the first novena ever, the novena prayed by the apostles: the Pentecost novena. We have some copies in the back of the Church or you can find one online at: <https://www.ewtn.com/devotionals/pentecost/seven.htm>

Join us on Thursday evening for a special Ascension Thursday Mass in the Extraordinary Form!



We don't have all the details yet but mark your calendar now for **THE CULTURAL EVENT OF THE CENTURY:** Old St. Patrick's Choir will have a special concert on May 22 at 1pm. More information in next week's bulletin!



Intensive Chant Seminar and an Excuse to Get Away for a Weekend!



On the weekend of June 10-12, Holy Family Catholic Church in Dayton, OH, is pleased to host Dr. Edward Schaefer for a chant intensive focused on basics of chant semiology with application available in several liturgical settings over the course of the weekend. Dr. Schaefer is a well-known expert in chant studies, professor of music at the University of Florida, author and translator of books on church music, and a frequent presenter at the colloquium of the CMAA (Church Music Association of America). He is

also an ordained deacon and directs a schola in Gainesville for the Latin Mass in that area.

Friday, June 10th, will open with an evening Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart followed by hors d'oeuvres and the chance to meet and greet Dr. Schaefer. Saturday, June 11th, will feature two sessions on chant semiology from 10AM to 5PM, followed by vespers.

To register contact John Schauble (Schola Director for Holy Family) by phone at 513.405.5094 or by e-mail at johnschauble@twc.com. Space is limited.

NOTES FROM FATHER GERALD

Refresh Your Basic Knowledge Every Once in a While... and News About Grit

On the other side of this page you'll find a condensed explanation of "transubstantiation" which is the word the Church uses to define what happens at the consecration of bread and wine at that Mass and how it becomes the Body and Blood of Christ.

I put this here because this week some of our children are receiving First Holy Communion. Also, it is good for all of us to review these concepts every once in a while so that we can keep them fresh in our mind. That being said, what I wrote is elementary.

Last Wednesday we had the Sacrament of Confirmation in our parish. For that reason, I distributed a chart in the bulletin last week on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that are particularly offered by that sacrament.

I think it is very important to review these little catechetical works when you can. If we don't think about some

of these things, our faith will wither. If we don't think about what constitutes our faith, our passion drains away (as for anything else).

And since I am doing a bit of a review, I would like to mention again a couple items that appeared in the bulletin a couple weeks ago:

First that I have good information that the Christian organization Compassion International is actively anti-Catholic and if that is one of the charities you give to, I strongly suggest you find a reliably Catholic instrument of giving to the poor. There are several good ones out there including Cross International.

That same week, I mentioned an article that appeared in the Wall Street Journal — 5 April — that took a fascinating look at how much better it is for students to take notes on pen and paper rather than laptops. Most college kids at least, use laptops. But writing notes by hand is much better for processing and retaining what is taught. I am not going to go into all the details again here. You can look these things up and I hope you do.

I believe old bulletins are up on the website for a few weeks as well as being available in the racks in the foyer of the Church.



You know that I am interested in the work of Dr. Angela Duckworth and the "grit lab" at the University of Pennsylvania. I have been talking about it for years.

Grit may be summed up by saying that those who succeed in life usually embody perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Grit requires self-control, the ability to delay short-term gratification for a long-term goal, and some capacity for having a vision and following it as a goal.

Dr. Duckworth would say that grit is more important than talent.

Dr. Duckworth has come out with a book about her theories. I do not yet have a copy so I don't know about its value yet. It won't be released until Tuesday. I'm looking forward to seeing it (though I wouldn't be able to read it for quite some time...). I hope you will consider the book for young people — especially boys — to consider what is necessary to succeed.

Outta room here. *Peace!* — Fr. G.

