

Once upon a time, I did not believe Jesus was God. After all, I thought to myself, how could God possibly become a man? How could the Creator become a member of His own creation? Later, I discovered that Jesus in fact claimed to be God; and furthermore, the evidence of history (both B.C. and A.D.) supported this outrageous claim! It remains a great mystery which will forever boggle the mind: the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (cf. John 1); yet this great mystery, as incomprehensible as it may be, is an actual historical fact! Having discovered this fact I, by the grace of God, became a Christian.

Once upon a time, as a non-Catholic Christian, I was told that Catholics believe when they celebrate the Lord's Supper the bread and wine cease to exist and the actual body and blood of Christ takes their place! I thought to myself, "This is ridiculous, how could Jesus be present – body, blood, soul and divinity – in the form of bread and wine? Once again, my perfectly legitimate skepticism proved to be contrary to the evidence. I soon discovered this "ridiculous" claim was actually taught by Jesus Himself! Once again, history does not lie. In the first centuries of Christianity the successors of the Apostles unanimously and universally taught precisely the same thing Catholics believe today! Having discovered this fact I, by the grace of God, became a Catholic.

But my initial quarrel with Catholic teaching on this matter was nothing new. This week's Gospel provides us with Jesus' response to my "quarrel":



"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." The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us (his) flesh to eat?" 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. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:51–58, NAB)

So, we discover that the teaching of the Church at the Second Vatican Council is nothing new; it simply reiterates the historic teaching of Jesus:

[The Eucharistic Sacrifice is] "the source and summit of the Christian life" . . . "for the most holy Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth: Christ himself, our Passover and living bread. Through his own flesh, now made living and life-giving by the Holy Spirit, he offers life to men." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1324; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, #5).

I imagine this astonishing teaching will be the subject of quarrels until the end of time. I pray that we, as Catholics, will cling to Jesus' words with all our hearts and minds because this great mystery, as incomprehensible as it may be, is an actual historical fact – whoever eats this bread will live forever!

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples

POF:

- 1) For our Pope, our bishops, priests, and deacons who minister at the sacred altar, that their love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament would be evident to all. We pray to the Lord.
- 2) For choirs, organists, musicians, and composers who help us to praise God with beauty and joy, that their faith in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass would inspire their music. We pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all gathered here to worship our Lord and Savior, that we would approach the Blessed Sacrament with faith, love and profound reverence. We pray to the Lord.