

About the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

What does the Church say about the Eucharist?

This is an excerpt from a Church document called ‘Lumen Gentium,’ which means ‘Light of the Nations’. (I italicized/underlined for emphasis.)

"The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up with the Eucharist and are directed towards it. *For in the most blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ Himself*, our Pasch and the living bread which gives life to men through His flesh that flesh which is given life and gives life through the Holy Spirit" (#5). For this reason, the Council referred to the *Holy Eucharist as the source and summit of the whole Christian life* (*Lumen Gentium*, #11).

The definition of transubstantiation (from CatholicCulture.org)

The complete change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood by a validly ordained priest during the consecration at Mass, so that only the accidents of bread and wine remain. (“Accidents” just means “outward appearance”).

The big question for catechists – how do we explain the Eucharist and transubstantiation to children?

First, read and learn as much as you can about the Eucharist. We can't possibly know everything, but the more we know, the easier it is to explain to others. Check the catechist page of our web site for some resources!

Also it can be very helpful to Google “explaining the Eucharist and transubstantiation to children”. You will find many articles and resources that way (and obviously this “hack” can be used for any topic) – just make sure the resources are Catholic, as other Christian faiths have very different beliefs about what Communion is.

Reassure children that the Eucharist is a miracle and a mystery even to adults, so it's okay to not completely understand it! As our Bishops have written, “The presence of the risen Christ in the Eucharist is an inexhaustible mystery that the Church can never fully explain in words.” Using the following analogy may be helpful:

Imagine that you have a blank CD. You take the blank CD and burn your favorite music onto it. After you burn the CD, it looks exactly the same as it did when it was blank. But in reality, the CD is not the same! This is similar to what happens when the priest consecrates the host and the wine. It still looks, feels and tastes like a host and wine, but it has become Jesus.

Now imagine that, instead of iTunes, Youtube and all the other ways we can listen to music, all of your very favorite songs were only on that ONE CD, and listening to the one CD was the only way you could listen to that music. How would you treat that CD? The consecrated host is similar in that it may look like just a wafer, but it is something far more precious – it is Jesus. This is why we treat the host with all of our reverence and respect. It also explains why we are taught to consume the host immediately after we receive it – we do not want to take any chances that anything might happen to something that is so very precious to us.