

The Council of Trent on the Eucharist, continued

The Council's treatment of the Eucharist, **The Sacrament of the Eucharist, Session 13 1551 CE**, centered around three main subjects:

The theological worldview of the council was decidedly Aristotelian. Hence, transubstantiation is employed as the means to articulate real presence.

The main objective of this session was to reaffirm the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and to clarify the change that took place within the Eucharistic species.

In response to the likes of Zwingli, i.e., those who maintained that Christ was present only as a sign or figure which facilitated our remembering of Him, the council taught:

It has at all times been the belief in the Church of God that immediately after the consecration the true body of our Lord and His true blood exist along with His soul and divinity under the form of bread and wine.

If anyone...says that Christ is present in it only as in a sign or figure: let him be anathema.

Hence the council was clarifying what was present in the Eucharist: Christ in His entirety. Thus the change that took place in the Eucharistic species was, therefore, radical.

For Christ whole and entire exists under the species of bread and under any part whatsoever of that species, likewise the whole Christ is present under the species of wine and under its parts.

Christ is present *truly* (in accord with Jesus' words), *substantially* (that which is contained is Jesus in His humanity and divinity), and *really* (Jesus is present in more than a figurative way), contained under the species (a *sacramental*, not spatial, presence that did compromise His presence at the right hand of God)...

Jesus is present upon consecration; this is understood to be an objective fact. Therefore, it is an objective presence in no way influenced/affected by the faith of the recipient.

Transubstantiation is the means by which this real presence comes about:

...by the consecration of the bread and wine a conversion takes place of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the body of Christ, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood.

This conversion is appropriately and properly called transubstantiation by the Catholic Church.

Via this change, the substance of bread and wine no longer remain, only the species.

Communion under both species, Session 21 1562 CE: The Roman custom of withholding the cup from the laity is maintained and justified by saying that there is no divine precept obliging the laity to receive the sacrament under both species.

Hence this holy council, taught by the Holy Spirit...and following the judgment and custom of the Church itself, declares and teaches that the laity, and clergy who are not consecrating, are under no divine command to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist under both kinds.

The council asserts the legitimacy of such a stance in light of history and the Church's power over the sacraments as long as their essentials remain intact.

The council acknowledges that in the early church there was communion under both species, but minimizes this fact in light of the Church's authority over the sacraments over time:

Although from the beginning of Christian worship the use of both kind was common, yet that custom was widely changed in the course of time; and so holy mother church, acknowledging her authority over the administration of the sacraments...

changes the practice

for good and serious reasons.

Here the contextual nature of the Church's response is evident, the very purpose of the council being to respond to the teachings of the Reformers.

Needing to defend herself, and incapable of interpreting the past in a manner to integrate it into the present, led the council to formulate responses on the basis of church practice rather than Christ's institution.

Eucharist as Sacrifice, Session 22 1562 CE

If anyone says that in the mass a real and true sacrifice is not offered to God...then let him be anathema.

The sacrifice was to be understood as the sacrifice of Christ through the priest—this is what the priesthood was established for. Furthermore, the sacrifice of the Eucharist was the selfsame sacrifice of Jesus' cross:

insofar as it is one and the same Victim, the same now offering by the ministry of priests as He who then offered Himself on the cross.

The only difference between the two is the manner of the offering. Through the priest, Christ did, in fact, offer Himself under the species of bread and wine, albeit in an unbloody manner.

The mass was understood to be more than a re-presentation/commemoration of the sacrifice of Jesus. It was this, and more! The sacrifice of the mass was a real sacrifice, the sacrifice of the cross made present again.

Thus the mass had propiatory effects; it made available the saving graces of Jesus' cross. This benefit of the mass could be applied to all persons, living and dead, for whom it was offered.

The selling of such benefices was discouraged.