

Real presence: eucharist

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



The Eucharistic Presence also known as the communion and the Last Supper is a significant part of the Christian religion . The Protestants believe that the communion is merely for the remembrance and the thanksgiving of Jesus's sacrifice for the people. However the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox believe that the ritual is a physical union, becoming one with Jesus by partaking in the eating of the body and bread. Jesus spoke “ My flesh is true food, my blood is true drink,”(John 6: 55) when the disciples were gathered for the Last Supper before Jesus died on the cross.

The intention of Jesus's saying was not of a metaphor but to be accepted literally which is done so by the Catholic church. The Eucharist is a sacrament of the last supper. It involves sacred elements that go through transubstantiation, a change in the substance, essence. This theological concept can be referred to as a Real Presence, in which the bread and wine changes its substance into body and blood along with the soul and divinity of Jesus. The concept of Real Presence was opposed during the reformation period of 1500 when there was a division within the church.

Before the concept of transubstantiation was officially codified, the term was already assumed and accepted in the literal sense. The oppositions and the divisions in the church lead the church into forming an Ecumenical council in Trent and the Vatican Council of 1962 where Episcopal powers aimed to defend and reinforce the belief in Real Presence. The Eucharist as the Real Presence of Christ can be seen through the Eucharistic dogma provided by the the Council of Trent, Vatican II.

Certain excerpts from scripture can be used to display the consistency of belief in the Eucharist as the literal blood and body of Jesus Christ. John
<https://assignbuster.com/real-presence-eucharist/>

Macquarrie in “ Paths in Spirituality” consist of concepts of temporal, spatial, and personal presence can be used to support the dogma of Eucharist as Real Presence. The Eucharist involves a theological concept of transubstantiation which was a term created to explain the mystery of the liturgy practice. It is a compound word consisting of two words that mean change and substance. Therefore the meaning of the word is a change of substance.

The substance refers to the uniqueness and the very nature of anything that exists. The accident refers to the eternal qualities that are subject to the senses. The substance of the bread and wine which is referred to as the “ breadness” and the “ wineness” transforms into the substance of the body and blood of Christ. However the appearance and the physical state of the bread and wine, which can be tasted, touched, smelled, all do not change. There are numerous writings by significant church figures to support the literal interpretation of the Eucharist as the Real Presence of Christ.

This can be seen in the works of Ignatius of Antioch, he writes “ Strive then to make use of one form of thanksgiving, for the flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ is one and one is the Chalice in the union of His Blood, one altar, one bishop. ” Saint Augustine wrote “ It was in His flesh that Christ walked among us and it is his flesh that he has given us to eat for our salvation” The early fathers of the church attested the belief in transubstantiation. The concept of transubstantiation was officially codified at the Council of Trent.

Even before the council of Trent, the Eastern church used a similar concept in Greek called metaousious “ change of substance. ” Variations in the interpretations regarding the liturgy of Eucharist started to form. The <https://assignbuster.com/real-presence-eucharist/>

Protestant reformation gave a rise to Constantiation which was formed by Martin Luther. The protest with the universal faith of Christians in the Real Presence began during the Protestant Reformation when Zwingli and Calvin refuted the concept of the real physical presence of Jesus in the Eucharist using their subjective interpretation of the text. Zwingli believed the Eucharist was just a symbolic experience.

Calvin refuted that it was more than a symbol, but less than Jesus' physical presence. He preferred a "spiritual" presence and never explained how this differed from the omnipresence of God. On the contrary, Luther protects the concept the Real Presence. Luther wrote: "Who, but the devil, hath granted such a license of wresting the words of the holy Scripture? Who ever read in the Scriptures, that my body is the same as the sign of my body? Or, that is the same as it signifies? What language in the world ever spoke so? It is only then the devil, that imposeth upon us by these fanatical men. . . Not one of the Fathers, though so numerous, ever spoke as the Sacramentarians: not one of them ever said, It is only bread and wine; or, the body and blood of Christ is not there present. " Luther believed in Constantiation which was when the substance of the bread and wine remain the same, coexisting with the substance of Jesus's blood and body. Eucharist as Real Presence can supported through biblical scriptures. The communion is for the receiving of Jesus into our bodies by eating his body and drinking his blood. In John 6: 56 "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. The word abide is significant in understanding transubstantiation. Jesus also uses the word "abide" in chapter fifteen when he mentions the vine and the vinedresser. The word abide in greek can also be translated as living. So

Christ is living in those that have ate his flesh and drank of his blood. John Macquarrie in *Paths in Spirituality* supports the Eucharistic as Real Presence through three concepts of present reality. Presence has several different significations that are fundamental in understanding the concept of transubstantiation. The first one is temporal presence. In the Eucharist there is a presence in time.

But the conflict in this understanding is that The Last Supper happened two thousand years ago. So how would the church bridge the time in between? Macquarrie writes, “ The Council of Trent, incidentally, used the word *repraesentatio* in connection with the Eucharist in the sense that it makes present again Christ’s saving work. We live between the Christ of history, of the historical incarnation, and the Christ of the future, the Christ who will come again with glory. But between times’ Christ is not absent. ” Therefore in the Eucharist, Christ is fully, and physically present.

Many protestants such as Bultmann, does not believe in the real, physical presence of Christ, rather a genuine presence in which Christ can only be revealed through the Word of God. But that is limiting the very possibility in Christ being present in many other ways. Where is Jesus present? God and Jesus is both omnipresent. But if God is present everywhere then what is the significance of Jesus being present in the bread and wine? Macquarrie inquires “ But how can this be reconciled with the idea of a particular presence? ” A universal presence of God is very hard to detect and recognize because he is simply everywhere.

But if his presence is densed, localized and particularized into one area there will be “ moments of intensity and meeting or encountering of God. Even in

<https://assignbuster.com/real-presence-eucharist/>

the Old Testament, God's presence was localized in the Ark of the Covenant, where His presence was experienced with intensity. The church can be another example of sacred space. Macquarrie claims, " If there was no particular places where one might find Christ present, I do not think he would be present anywhere. " Summation of the presences leads to the personal presence. It is a multidimensional presence where it is not limited to time and space.

Christ can be revealed in the actions of his people. He is revealed in the community of the faithful, the body of Christ, " sometimes called the extension of the incarnation. " Protestants receive the Eucharist as spiritual presence. however the spiritual presence is inferior to the personal presence. Personal presence has no limitations and boundaries in the human experience which includes spatial, temporal and even spiritual. Because the accidents of the elements do not change, there is no empirical verification, leaving the presence visible only to those that have eyes of faith.

Many Christians abstain from the practice of Eucharist because they refuse to believe that the Eucharist is the real flesh of Jesus Christ. Even great Christian thinkers like Calvin believed in a limited presence of Christ in the communion. In disputing over the real presence in Eucharist through biblical justifications, divisions in the church started to form. " Interpretation of certain verses has been a source of division between Christians, and not only in creating separation between Catholics and Protestants.

Luther and Calvin also stood in fundamental disagreement over the doctrine of the real presence in the elements, and these verses played no small part in that dispute. " However this was good for the church because they were

able to filter out the different interpretations of the Eucharist. The Eucharist as the Real Presence of Christ can be seen through the Eucharistic dogma provided by the the Council of Trent, Vatican II. John Macquarrie in “ Paths in Spirituality” can also assist further supporting the idea of real presence through the concepts of temporal, spatial, and personal presence.

CITATIONS - Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Mysterium Fidei*. 1965, St. Paul Books and Media, Boston, MA. p. 354. - St. Ignatius “ Letter to the Romans,” J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 405. - Luther’s *Collected Works*, Wittenburg Edition, Vol. VII, p. 391. - Foster, Paul. 2006. “ Jesus, The Real Presence of God (John 6: 35, 41-51). ” *Expository Times* 117, no. 10: 416-417. - Macquarrie, John. *Paths in Spirituality*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. p. 83-93 ----- [1]. Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Mysterium Fidei*. 1965, St.

Paul Books and Media, Boston, MA. p. 354. [2]. Luther’s *Collected Works*, Wittenburg Edition, Vol. VII, p. 391. [3]. Macquarrie, John. *Paths in Spirituality*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. p 84 [4]. Macquarrie, John. *Paths in Spirituality*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. p 83 [5]. Macquarrie, John. *Paths in Spirituality*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. p 84 [6]. Macquarrie, John. *Paths in Spirituality*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. p 84 [7]. Foster, Paul. 2006. “ Jesus, The Real Presence of God (John 6: 35, 41-51). ” *Expository Times* 117, no. 10: 416-417.