

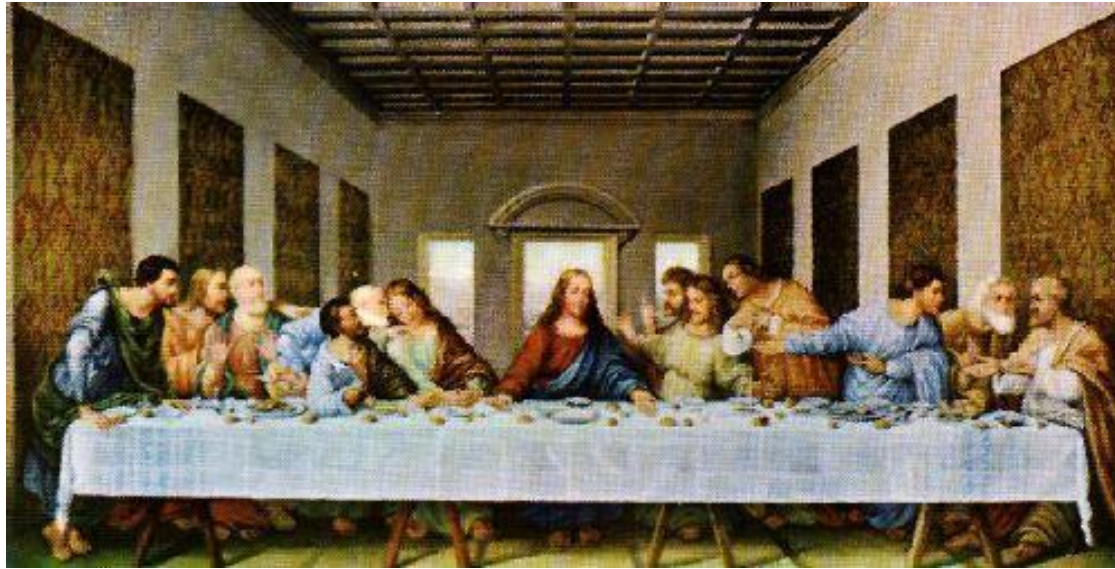
THE EUCHARIST:

The Body and Blood of Jesus Christ

**Part Vf:
The Institution
of the Eucharist**



The Eucharist: The Lord's Supper



Catholic Christians share with most Christians the faith that Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, ate a final or last supper with his Apostles.

This final meal was also the celebration of the **Jewish Passover** and **Feast of the Unleavened Bread** which commemorated the passing over of the Jews from the death in slavery to the Egyptians to life in the Promised Land.

Christians differ in the meaning this Last Supper has to them and the Church today. Catholic Christians together with other historical Christian Churches (e.g., Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine Christians, Lutherans, Anglicans and some Episcopalians, etc.) believe **the literal words of Jesus** - that the bread and wine are truly his body and blood.

Other later Christian Churches profess **a mere symbolic or mystical meaning** to the words of Jesus.



The faith of the Catholic Church is based on both a fundamental **principle of hermeneutics** and the constant faith of the Church from Apostolic times.

The Catholic Church teaches that the first principle of hermeneutics--the science of the translation and interpretation of the Bible--is the literal meaning of the text.

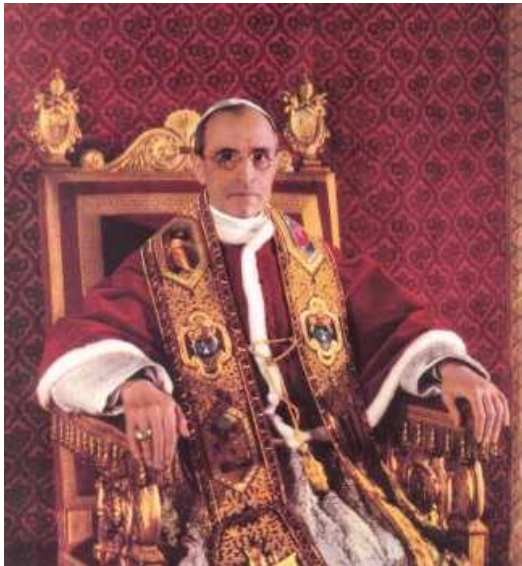
***Spiritus Paraclitus* Benedict XV, September 15, 1920**

As Jerome insisted, **all biblical interpretation rests upon the literal sense ...**



Divino Afflante Spiritus, Pius XII, September 30, 1943

... discern and define that **sense of the biblical words which is called literal** ... so that the mind of the author may be made clear. ... the exegete must be principally **concerned with the literal sense** of the Scriptures.

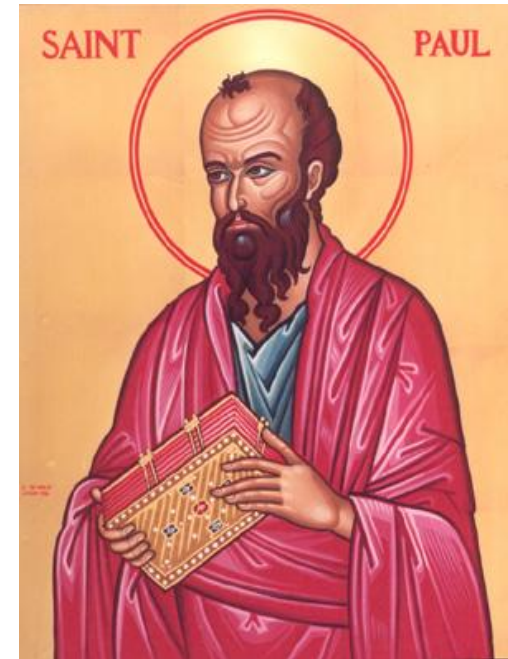


The definition of **the literal sense**:

The sense which the human author directly intended and which his words convey.

The first writer of the New Testament was **the apostle Paul**. His **Letter to the Corinthians** was written as early as **56**, earlier than the first Gospel, Mark's, written about 65.

Paul was also not an eyewitness to what he wrote but testifies to his source.



First Century Timeline

Paul's
Letter to the Corinthians

Mark's
Gospel

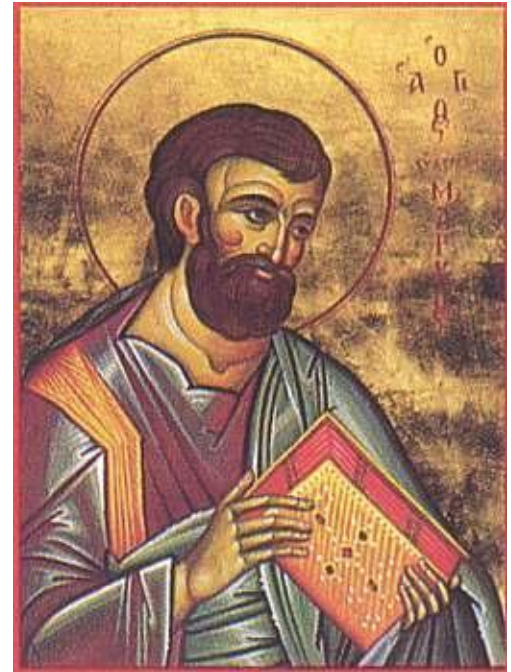
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1 Corinthians 11:23-29

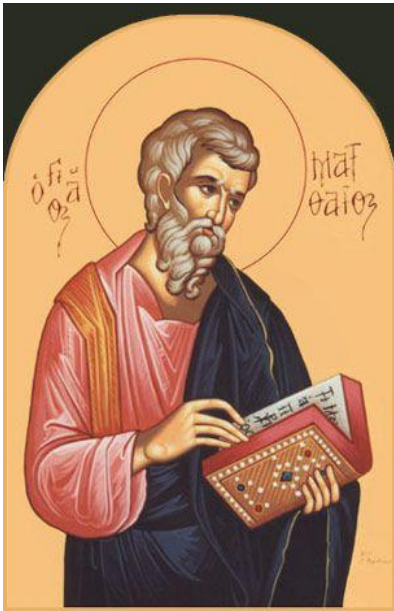
For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “**This is my body** that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “**This cup is the new covenant in my blood**. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

The next New Testament text in chronological order would have been **Mark's Gospel**. Written about **65**, in Rome, Mark, not an eyewitness, probably heard the account of the Last Supper he recorded from the Apostle Peter.



Mark 14:22-24

While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take it; **this is my body.**” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, “**This is my blood of the covenant,** which will be shed for many.”

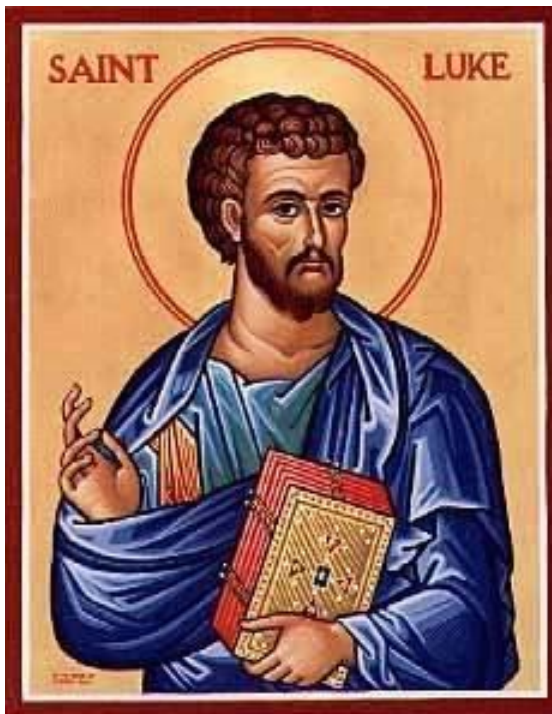


The third account of the Last Supper could be **Matthew's**. Matthew, the tax collector Levi, was an eyewitness to the meal. He was one of the twelve Apostles. Matthew probably wrote his Gospel in **the 70s**.

Matthew 26:26-28

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; **this is my body**.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for **this is my blood** of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Luke's account of the Last Supper, written from the standpoint of a Gentile convert and a non-eyewitness, probably heard the details of the Last Supper from Paul. Luke was a traveling companion of Paul. Luke also wrote in **the 70s**.



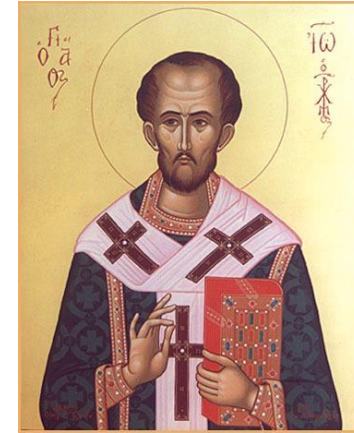
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Luke 22:15-20

He (Jesus) said to them, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it (again) until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, “Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you (that) from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “**This is my body**, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “**This cup is the new covenant in my blood**, which will be shed for you.”

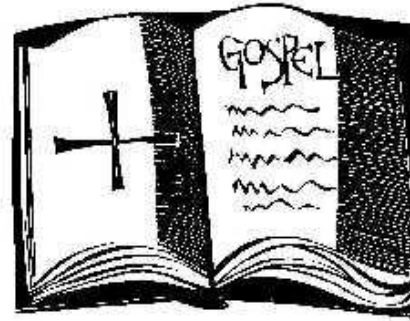
The beloved disciple, **John**, the last of the New Testament writers, wrote his Gospel in **the 90s**. John was an eyewitness to the events of the Last Supper (John 6:30-68).



John 6:53-56

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.”

Hence Catholic Christian belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist rests upon the literal meaning of the words of the Last Supper as recorded by the Evangelists and Paul.



The **uniformity of expression** across the four authors affirms the literalness. Belief in the real presence demands faith--the basis of new life as called for by Christ throughout scripture. But faith in signs conferring what they signify is the basis also for the Incarnation--appearances belying true meaning.

The true significance of the real presence is sealed in John's gospel. Five times in different expressions, Jesus confirmed the reality of what he means.

John 6:51

(*phagi*, to eat)



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.

John 6:53



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.

John 6:54

(*trogon*, to gnaw, chew)



Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.

John 6:55



For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

John 6:56



Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.

The best way a person can **make a clear literal point** is **repetition of the same message in different ways**. Jesus did this.

Those around him clearly understood what he was saying--**cannibalism and the drinking of blood**--both forbidden by Mosaic Law.

John 6:60,66

Then many of his disciples who were listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” ... As a result of this, many (of) his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.

Had these disciples mistaken the meaning of Jesus' words, Jesus would surely have known and corrected them. He didn't. They had clearly understood his meaning--Jesus' flesh was to be really eaten; his blood to be really drunk.

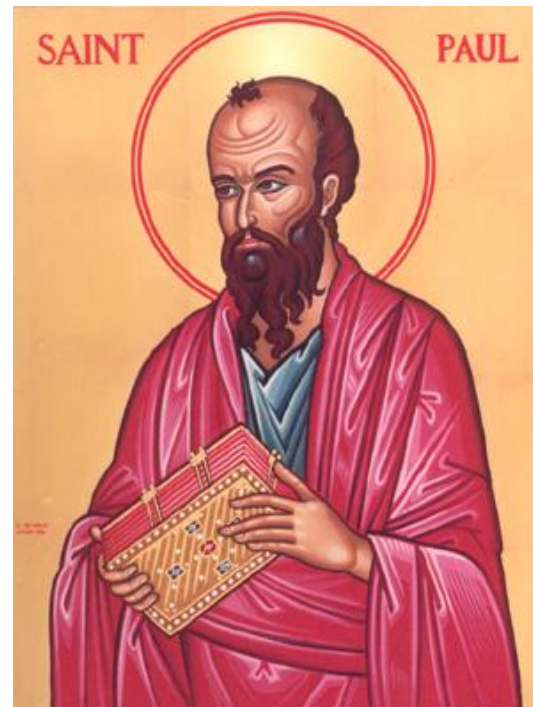
Non believers often respond that even at the Last Supper, the apostles did not sense that they had flesh in their hands and blood in their cup. But Jesus is God. The creative literalness of the words: “This is my body; this is my blood” must be believed. God cannot lie. And God can turn bread into flesh and wine into blood without the appearances of bread and wine changing.

Medieval philosophers and theologians called this expression of Divine Truth and Creative Power “transubstantiation.” Yes, God can change the substance of any created matter while the appearances remain unchanged. And this demands faith.

Paul confirms elsewhere in his letters the reality of the real presence.

1 Corinthians 10:16

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not **a participation in the blood of Christ**? The bread that we break, is it not **a participation in the body of Christ**?



The persuasion of the Church from Apostolic times about the objective reality of these words of Christ is clear from many documents.

St. Ignatius of Antioch,
Epistle to the Romans, c 105

“I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire **the bread of God**, which is **the flesh of Jesus Christ**, who was of the seed of David; and for drink I desire **His blood**, which is love incorruptible.”



Irenaeus (Asia Minor, 140 - 202), **Tertullian** (Rome, 160 - 220), **Cyprian** (Carthage, 200 - 258) are just a few of the earliest who attest to the objective reality of the words of Christ.

In the Church in Alexandria, **Athanasius** (293 - 373) and **Cyril** (376 - 444) equally attest to the literal meaning of the words of Christ at the Last Supper.

In the Church in Palestine, **Cyril** (Jerusalem, 315 - 387) and **Epiphanius** (Salamis, 367 - 403) also affirm in their teaching the same reality.



Unanimity is found across the universal church until the 11th century. Berengar (Tours, France, 1000 - 1088) was one of the first to **deny the real presence** by arguing that Christ is not physically present, but only symbolically.

The Council of Rome (a local council), in 1079, taught against Berengar that the Eucharist is truly the body and blood of Christ.

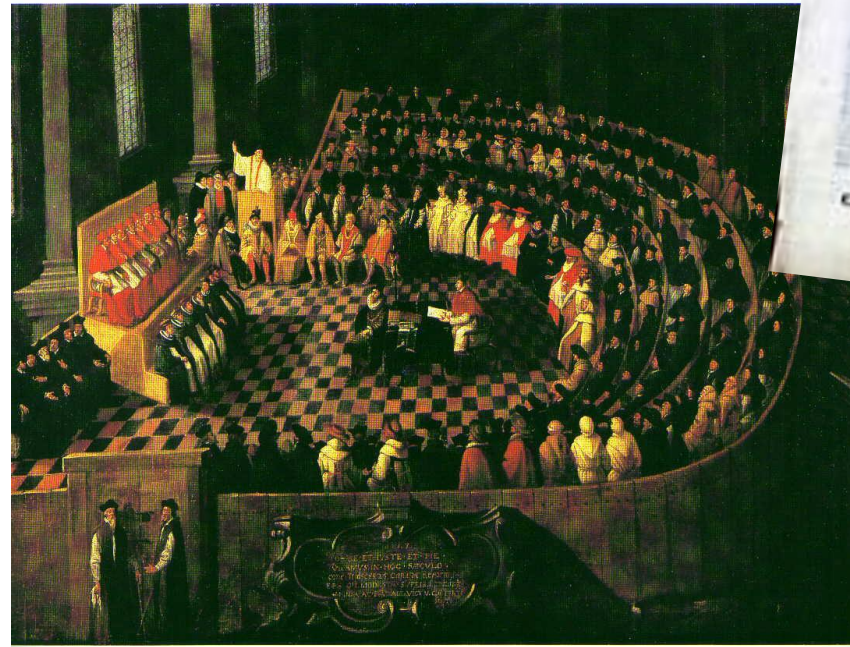
By the 16th century, some Reformers (excluding Luther) also taught that Christ's presence in the Eucharist was only **figurative or metaphorical**. Since there were other opinions being taught as truth (figurative presence and metaphorical presence) a teaching authority had to be appealed to discern error from the truth. The way of the Church was to follow the model of Acts 15.

Berenger Council
of
Rome Reformation



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The **Council of Trent** (1545 - 1563) defined the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the Eucharist as both the continuing sacrifice of Christ and a real sacrament. The institution of the Eucharist as sacrament was contained in the words “Do this in remembrance of me.”



Council of Trent, opening, 1548

End of
Institution of the Eucharist, Part Vf

Go to
Eucharistic Evidences, Part Vg