

## **21 Centuries of Catholic Doctrine: THE HOLY EUCHARIST**

*As taught in the Church's historical writings, from the time of the Apostles down to today*

**ca. 70 A.D.—*Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles***

—*Necessity of a pure conscience to receive*—

4 In church, make confession of your faults, and do not come to your prayers with a bad conscience.

This is the Way of Life. ...

—*Necessity of Baptism to receive*—

9 No one is to eat or drink of your Eucharist but those who have been baptized in the Name of the Lord; for the Lord's own saying applies here, "Give not that which is holy unto dogs" (Matt. 7:6) ...

10 Thou, O Almighty Lord, hast created all things for thine own Name's sake; to all men thou hast given meat and drink to enjoy, that they may give thanks to thee, but to us thou hast graciously given spiritual meat and drink, together with life eternal, through thy Servant. ...

—*Necessity of a pure conscience to receive; Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

14 Assemble on the Lord's Day [i.e., Sunday], and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until they have been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice. For this is the offering of which the Lord has said, *Everywhere and always bring me a sacrifice that is undefiled, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is the wonder of the nations* (Mal. 1:11, 14).

**ca. 96—*Pope Saint Clement, fourth Bishop of Rome, disciple of the Apostles Peter and Paul, Letter to the Corinthians***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

36:1 This is the way, beloved, in which we found our salvation, Jesus Christ, the High

Priest of our offerings [i.e., the Eucharist], the defender and helper of our weakness. ...

—*Ministerial priesthood*—

40:1-5 Since, therefore, these things are clear to us, and we have looked into the depths of the divine knowledge, we ought to do in proper order all those things which the Master has commanded us to perform at appointed times. He has commanded the offerings and services to be celebrated, and not carelessly nor in disorder, but at fixed times and hours. He has, moreover, by His supreme will, determined where and by whom He wants them to be carried out, so that all may be done in a holy manner, according to His good pleasure and acceptable to His will. Those, then, who make their offerings at the appointed times, are acceptable and blessed; for they follow the laws of the Master and do not sin. To the high priest, indeed, proper ministrations are allotted, to the priests a proper place is appointed, and upon the levites their proper services are imposed. The layman is bound by the ordinances for the laity. ...

41:2 Not everywhere, brethren, are the continual sacrifices offered, whether of petitions or in reparation for sins and trespasses, but only in Jerusalem; and even there, not in every place, but only in front of the inner temple on the altar of sacrifice; and the offering is first inspected for blemishes by the high priest and the ministers already mentioned. ...

44:4-6 Our sin will not be small if we eject from the episcopate those who blamelessly and holily have offered its Sacrifices. Blessed are those presbyters who have already finished their course, and who have obtained a fruitful and perfect release; for they have now no fear that any shall transfer them from the place to which they are appointed. For we see that in spite of their good service you have removed

some from the ministry in which they served without blame.

—*ca. 100 A.D., Death of Saint John, the last of the Apostles*

**ca. 107—Saint Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, disciple of the Apostle John, *Letter to the Ephesians***

—*Ministerial priesthood—*

13:1-2 Try to gather more frequently to celebrate God's Eucharist and to praise him. For when you meet with frequency, Satan's powers are overthrown and his destructiveness is undone by the unanimity of your faith. ...

20:2 I will [write you a second letter] especially if the Lord shows me that you are all, every one of you, meeting together under the influence of the grace that we owe to the Name, in one faith and in union with Christ ... At these meetings you should heed the bishop and presbytery attentively, and break one loaf, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote which wards off death but yields continuous life in union with Jesus Christ.

**ca. 107—Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians***

—*Ministerial priesthood; necessity of a pure conscience to receive—*

3:2-4:1 Those, indeed, who belong to God and to Jesus Christ—they are with the bishop. And those who repent and come to the unity of the Church—they too shall be of God, and will be living according to Jesus Christ. Do not err, my brethren: if anyone follow a schismatic, he will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10). If any man walk about with strange doctrine, he cannot lie down with the passion. Take care, then, to use one Eucharist, so that whatever you do, you do according to God: for there is one Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the union of His Blood; one altar, as there is one bishop with the presbytery and my fellow servants, the deacons.

**ca. 107—Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaens***

—*Necessity of a pure conscience to receive—*

6:2-7:2 Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God. For love they have no care, nor for the widow, nor for the orphan, nor for the distressed, nor for those in prison or freed from prison, nor for the hungry and thirsty (cf. Matt. 25:35-36). They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because

they do not confess that the Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, Flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in His goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God (John 4:10) are perishing in their disputes. It would be better for them to have love, so that they might rise again. It is right to shun such men, and not even to speak about them,—neither in public nor in private. ...

—*Ministerial priesthood—*

8:1-2 You must follow the bishop as Jesus Christ follows the Father, and the presbytery as you would the Apostles. Reverence the deacons as you would the command of God. Let no one do anything of concern to the Church without the bishop. Let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is celebrated by the bishop, or by one whom he appoints. Wherever the bishop appears, let the people be there; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.

**ca. 150—Saint Justin the Martyr, *First Apology***

—*Necessity of Baptism and a pure conscience to receive—*

66 We call this food *Eucharist*; and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration, and is thereby living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by Him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and blood of that incarnated Jesus.

—*Ministerial priesthood—*

The Apostles, in the Memoirs which they produced, which are called Gospels, have thus passed on that which was enjoined upon them: that Jesus took bread and, having given thanks, said, "Do this in remembrance of Me; this is My Body" (Luke 22:19). And in like manner, taking the cup, and having given thanks, He said, "This is My Blood" (Matt. 26:27-28, et al.). And He imparted this to them only. ...

67 Afterwards we continually remind each other of these things. And those who have possessions come to the aid of all those who are poor; and we are always at one with each other. For everything that has been given to

our use, we praise the Creator of all through His Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. On the day which is dedicated to the sun [i.e., Sunday], all those who live in the cities or who dwell in the countryside gather in a common meeting, and for as long as there is time the Memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read. Then, when the reader has finished, the president verbally gives a warning and appeal for the imitation of these good examples.

—*Ministerial priesthood*—

Then we all rise together and offer prayers, and, as we said before, when our prayer is ended, bread is brought forward along with wine and water, and the president likewise gives thanks to the best of his ability, and the people call out their assent, saying the *Amen*. Then there is the distribution to each and the participation in the Eucharistic elements, which also are sent with the deacons to those who are absent. Those who are wealthy and who wish to do so, contribute whatever they themselves care to give; and the collection is placed with the president, who aids the orphans and the widows, and those who through sickness or any other cause are in need, and those who are imprisoned, and the strangers who are sojourning with us—and in short, he takes care of all who are in need.

The Day of the Sun [i.e., Sunday] is the day on which we all gather in a common meeting, because it is the first day, the day on which God, changing darkness and matter, created the world; and it is the day on which Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Kronos [i.e., Greek version of the Roman god “Saturn”]; thus “Saturday”]; and on the day after that of Kronos, which is the Day of the Sun, He appeared to His Apostles and disciples, and taught them these things which we have also submitted to you for your consideration.

**ca. 155—Justin the Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

[Justin:] “Also, sirs,” I said, “the offering of fine wheat flour which was prescribed to be offered on behalf of those cleansed of leprosy was a type of the Bread of the Eucharist, the celebration of which our Lord Jesus Christ prescribed in memory of the passion He suffered on behalf of those men who are cleansed in their souls of every evil. ... Moreover, as I said before, concerning the

sacrifices which you at that time offered, God speaks through Malachias, one of the twelve [lesser prophets], as follows: ‘I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord; and I will not accept your sacrifices from your hands; for from the rising of the sun until its setting, my name has been glorified among the gentiles; and in every place incense is offered in my name, and a clean offering: for great is my name among the gentiles, says the Lord; but you profane it’ (Mal. 1:10-12). It is of the sacrifices offered to Him in every place by us, the gentiles, that is, of the Bread of the Eucharist and likewise of the cup of the Eucharist, that He speaks at that time; and He says that we glorify His name, while you profane it.”

**ca. 185—Saint Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, disciple of Saint Polycarp of Smyrna, *Against Heresies***

4:17:5 Again, giving counsel to His disciples to offer to God the first-fruits from among His creatures, not as if He needed them, but so that they themselves might be neither unfruitful nor ungrateful, He took from among creation that which is bread, and gave thanks, saying, “This is My Body” (Matt. 26:26, et al.). The cup likewise, which is from among the creation to which we belong, He confessed to be His Blood.

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

He taught the new sacrifice of the New Covenant, of which Malachias, one of the twelve prophets, had signified beforehand: “‘You do not do My will,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and I will not accept a sacrifice at your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting My name is glorified among the gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to My name, and a pure sacrifice; for great is My name among the gentiles,’ says the Lord Almighty” (Mal. 1:11). By these words He makes it plain that the former people will cease to make offerings to God; but that in every place sacrifice will be offered to Him, and indeed, a pure one; for His name is glorified among the Gentiles. ...

4:18:2 Sacrifice as such has not been reprobated. There were sacrifices then, sacrifices among the people; and there are sacrifices now, sacrifices in the Church. Only the kind has been changed; for now the sacrifice is offered not by slaves but by free men. ...

4:18:4-5 But what consistency is there in those who hold that the bread over which thanks have been given is the Body of their Lord, and

the cup His Blood, if they do not acknowledge that He is the Son of the Creator of the world, that is, His Word, through whom the wood bears fruit, and the fountains gush forth, and the earth gives first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain on the ear? How can they say that the flesh which has been nourished by the Body of the Lord and by His Blood gives way to corruption and does not partake of life? Let them either change their opinion, or else stop offering the things mentioned.

For thanksgiving is consistent with our opinion; and the Eucharist confirms our opinion. For we offer to Him those things which are His, declaring in a fit manner the gift and the acceptance of flesh and spirit. For as the bread from the earth, receiving the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but the Eucharist, consisting of two elements, earthly and heavenly, so also our bodies when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible but have the hope of resurrection into eternity.

...

5:2:2 They are vain in every respect, who despise the entire dispensation of God, and deny the salvation of the body and spurn its regeneration, saying that it is not capable of immortality. If the body be not saved, then, in fact, neither did the Lord redeem us with His Blood; and neither is the cup of the Eucharist the partaking of His Blood nor is the Bread which we break the partaking of His Body (1 Cor. 10:16). ... As we are His members, so too are we nourished by means of created things, He Himself granting us the creation, causing His sun to rise and sending His rain as He wishes. He has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be His own Blood, from which He causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, He has established as His own Body, from which He gives increase to our bodies.

5:2:3 When, therefore, the mixed cup and the baked bread receives the Word of God and becomes the Eucharist, the Body of Christ, and from these the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they say that the flesh is not capable of receiving the gift of God, which is eternal life—flesh which is nourished by the Body and Blood of the Lord, and is in fact a member of Him?

In this regard the blessed Paul says in his Letter to the Ephesians: 'Because we are members of His Body, from His flesh and His bones' (Eph. 5:30). ... In the same way that the wood of the vine planted in the ground bears fruit in due

season; or as a grain of wheat, falling to the ground, decomposes and rises up in manifold increase through the Spirit of God who contains all things; and then, through the Wisdom of God, becomes the Eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ; so also our bodies, nourished by it, and deposited in the earth and decomposing therein, shall rise up in due season, the Word of God favoring them with resurrection in the glory of God the Father.

**ca. 190—Saint Abercius Marcellus, Bishop of Hieropolis, *Epitaph***

Everywhere faith led the way and everywhere set food before me,—fish from the fountain

Mighty and pure, which the chaste virgin caught,—

And gave this to friends to eat, always

Having good wine, giving mixed wine with bread.

**ca. 200—Saint Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor of the Children***

1:6:41:3 When the loving and benevolent Father had rained down the Word, that Word then became the spiritual nourishment of those who have good sense. ...

1:6:42:1, 3 Calling her children about her, [the Church] nourishes them with holy milk, that is with the Infant Word. ... The Word is everything to a child: both the Father and Mother, both Instructor and Nurse. "Eat my Flesh," He says, "and drink my Blood" (John 6:55). The Lord supplies us with these intimate nutriment. He delivers over His Flesh, and pours out His Blood; and nothing is lacking for the growth of His children. O incredible Mystery! ...

2:2:19:4-20:1 The Blood of the Lord, indeed, is twofold. There is his corporeal Blood, by which we are redeemed from corruption; and His spiritual Blood, that with which we are anointed. That is to say, to drink the Blood of Jesus is to share in His immortality. The strength of the Word is the Spirit just as the blood is the strength of the body. Similarly, as wine is blended with water, so is the Spirit with man. The one, the Watered Wine, nourishes in faith, while the other, the Spirit, leads us on to immortality. The union of both, however,—of the drink and of the Word,—is called the Eucharist, a praiseworthy and excellent gift. Those who partake of it in faith are sanctified in body and in soul. By the will of the Father,

the divine mixture, man, is mystically united to the Spirit and to the Word.

**ca. 205—Tertullian, *Prayer***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

19:1-4 [I]n regard to days of fast, many do not think they should be present at the sacrificial prayers [i.e., the Liturgy], because their fast would be broken if the were to receive the Body of the Lord. Does the Eucharist, then, obviate a work devoted to God, or does it bind it more to God? Will not your fast be more solemn if, in addition, you have stood at God's altar? The Body of the Lord having been received and reserved, each point is secured: both the participation in the sacrifice and the discharge of duty.

**ca. 210—Tertullian, *The Resurrection of the Dead***

8:3 The flesh feeds on the Body and Blood of Christ, so that the soul too may fatten on God. They cannot, then, be separated in their reward, when they are united in their works.

**211—Tertullian, *The Crown***

—*Ministerial priesthood*—

3:3-4 The Sacrament of the Eucharist, which the Lord commanded to be taken at meal times and by all, we take even before daybreak in congregation, but from the hand of none others except the presidents.

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice; preservation of the Host*—

We offer sacrifices for the dead on their birthday anniversaries. We regard it as unlawful to fast or to worship on our knees except on the Lord's Day. . . . We take anxious care lest something of our Cup or Bread should fall upon the ground.

**ca. 217—Saint Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop of Pontus, disciple of Irenaeus, *Commentary on Proverbs***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

"And she [i.e., Wisdom] hath furnished her table:" (Prov. 9:2) that denotes the promised knowledge of the Holy Trinity; it also refers to His honoured and undefiled body and blood, which day by day are administered and offered sacrificially at the spiritual divine table, as a memorial of that first and ever-memorable table of the spiritual divine supper.

**ca. 217—Hippolytus, *Discourse on the End of the World***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice: ministerial priesthood*—

41 Then He shall gather together all nations, as

the holy Gospel so strikingly declares. . . .

Come, ye hierarchs, who did me sacred service blamelessly day and night, and made the oblation of my honourable body and blood daily.

**ca. 245—Origen, *Homilies on Exodus***

—*Preservation of the Host; necessity of a pure conscience to receive*—

13:3 I wish to admonish you with examples from your religion. You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you have received the Body of the Lord, you reverently exercise every care lest a particle of it fall, and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish. You account yourselves guilty, and rightly do you so believe, if any of it be lost through negligence. But if you observe such caution in keeping His Body, and properly so, how is it that you think neglecting the word of God a lesser crime than neglecting His Body?

**250—Saint Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, *Letter to His Clergy***

—*Necessity of a pure conscience to receive; ministerial priesthood*—

16 [9]:2 Although for lesser [i.e., venial] sins it is required that sinners do penance for a just time, after which, according to the rule of discipline, they may come to confession and, through the imposition of hands by the bishop and clergy, may receive the right of communication [i.e., Holy Communion], now, in an unpropitious time and while the persecution continues, when peace is not yet restored to the Church itself, they are being admitted to communication, and the offering [i.e., Eucharist] is made in their name; and, not yet having made a confession of sin, not yet having had hands imposed upon them by the bishop and clergy, the Eucharist is given to them, in spite of what is written: "Whoever shall eat the Bread or drink the Cup of the Lord unworthily, will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:27).

**ca. 253—Cyprian, *Letter to a Certain Cecili***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

63:4 Also in the priest Melchisedech we see the Sacrament of the Sacrifice of the Lord prefigured, in accord with that to which the Divine Scriptures testify, where it says: "And Melchisedech, the King of Salem, brought out bread and wine, for he was a priest of the Most High God; and he blessed Abraham (Gen. 14:18-19)." That Melchisedech is in fact a type of Christ is declared in the psalms by the Holy

Spirit, saying to the Son, as it were from the Father: "Before the daystar I begot You. You are a Priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. 109 [110]:3-4).

The order certainly is that which comes from his sacrifice and which comes down from it: because Melchisedech was a priest of the Most High God; because he offered bread; and because he blessed Abraham. And who is more a priest of the Most High God than our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when He offered sacrifice to God the Father, offered the very same which Melchisedech offered, namely bread and wine, which is in fact His Body and Blood!

—313, *The Edict of Milan: legalization of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire*

**325—First Council of Nicaea, first ecumenical council, *Canons***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice: necessity of a pure conscience to receive*—

11 In regard to those who transgressed without compulsion or without confiscation of their property or without danger or something of the sort, which happened during the usurpation of Licinius, it is decided by the council, even though they are unworthy of mercy, to treat them, nevertheless, with kindness. Those, then, who are truly repentant, shall, as already baptized, spend three years among the hearers, and seven years among the kneelers, and for two years they shall participate with the people in prayers, but without taking part in the offering (i.e., the Eucharist). ...

—*Viaticum ("Food for the Journey," Last Eucharist)*—

13 In regard to those who are dying, the ancient and canonical law is even now to be observed, so that if someone is dying, let him not be deprived of the last and most necessary Viaticum. ...

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice: ministerial priesthood*—

18 It has come to the attention of the holy and great council that in some localities and cities deacons give the Eucharist to presbyters, although neither the canon nor the custom permits those who do not offer sacrifice to give the Body of Christ to those who do offer the sacrifice.

**ca. 357—Saint Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, Doctor of the Church, *The Trinity***

8:14 When we speak of the reality of Christ's nature being in us, we would be speaking foolishly and impiously—had we not learned it

from Him. For he himself says: "My Flesh is truly food, and My Blood is truly drink. He that eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood will remain in Me and I in him" (John 6:56-57). As to the reality of His Flesh and Blood, there is no room left for doubt, because now, both by the declaration of the Lord Himself and by our own faith, it is truly Flesh and it is truly Blood. And these elements bring it about, when taken and consumed, that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. Is this not true? Let those who deny that Jesus Christ is true God be free to find these things untrue. But He Himself is in us through the flesh and we are in Him, while that which we are with Him is in God.

**ca. 370—Saint Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, Doctor of the Church, *Sermon to the Newly Baptized***

—*Ministerial priesthood*—

You shall see the Levites bringing loaves and a cup of wine, and placing them on the table. So long as the prayers of supplication and entreaties have not been made, there is only bread and wine. But after the great and wonderful prayers have been completed, then the bread is become the Body, and the wine the Blood, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

... Let us approach the celebration of the mysteries. This bread and this wine, so long as the prayers and supplications have not taken place, remain simply what they are. But after the great prayers and holy supplications have been sent forth, the Word comes down into the bread and wine—and thus His Body conformed.

**385—Pope Saint Siricius, 38<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, *Letter to Bishop Himerius of Tarragona***

—*Viaticum ("Food for the Journey," Last Eucharist)*—

Inasmuch as [habitual sinners] fell through frailty of the flesh, we bid you succor them with the gift of the viaticum, through the grace of communion, when they start on their way to the Lord.

**390-391—Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Doctor of the Church, *The Sacraments***

4:4:13 Who, then, is the author of the Sacraments if not the Lord Jesus? Those Sacraments came from heaven; for every counsel is from heaven. ...

—*Ministerial priesthood*—

4:4:14 You may perhaps say: "My bread is ordinary." But that bread is bread before the words of the Sacraments; where the consecration has entered in, the bread

becomes the flesh of Christ. And let us add this: How can what is bread be the Body of Christ? By the consecration. The consecration takes place by certain words; but whose words? Those of the Lord Jesus. Like all the rest of the things said beforehand, they are said by the priest; praises are referred to God, prayer of petition is offered for the people, for kings, for other persons; but when the time comes for the confection of the venerable Sacrament, then the priest uses not his own words but the words of Christ. Therefore it is the word of Christ that confects this Sacrament. ...

4:5:23 Before it may be consecrated it is bread; but where the words of Christ come in, it is the Body of Christ. Finally, hear Him saying: "All of you take and eat of this; for this is My Body" (Luke 22:19). And before the words of Christ the chalice is full of wine and water; but where the words of Christ have been operative it is made of the Blood of Christ, which redeems the people.

**398—Saint Jerome, Doctor of the Church,  
*Commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew*  
—Eucharist as Sacrifice—**

4:26:26 After the type had been fulfilled by the passover celebration and He had eaten the flesh of the lamb with His Apostles, He takes bread which strengthens the heart of man, and goes on to the true Sacrament of the passover, so that just as Melchisedech, the priest of the Most High God, in prefiguring Him, made bread and wine an offering, He too makes Himself manifest in the reality of His own Body and Blood.

**ca. 403—Saint John Chrysostom, Bishop of  
Constantinople, *Homilies on the Epistle to  
the Hebrews*  
—Eucharist as Sacrifice—**

17:3 [6] What then? Do we not offer daily? Yes, we offer, but making remembrance of His death; and this remembrance is one and not many. How is it one and not many? Because this Sacrifice is offered once, like that in the Holy of Holies. This Sacrifice is a type of that, and this remembrance a type of that. We offer always the same, not one sheep now and another tomorrow, but the same thing always. Thus there is one Sacrifice. By this reasoning, since the Sacrifice is offered everywhere, are there, then, a multiplicity of Christs? By no means! Christ is one everywhere. He is complete here, complete there, one Body. And just as He is one Body and not many though

offered everywhere, so too is there one Sacrifice.

**ca. 415—Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo,  
Doctor of the Church, *Explanations of the  
Psalms***

33:1:10 "And he was carried in his own hands." But, brethren, how is it possible for a man to do this? Who can understand it? Who is it that is carried in his own hands? A man can be carried in the hands of another; but no one can be carried in his own hands. How this should be understood literally of David, we cannot discover; but we can discover how it was meant of Christ. For Christ was carried in His own hands, when, referring to His own Body, He said: "This is My Body" (Matt. 26:26). For He carried that Body in His hands. ...

98:9 "And adore the footstool of His feet, because it is holy" (Ps. 98 [99]:9). ... In another place in the Scriptures it says: "The heavens are My throne, but the earth is the footstool of My feet" (Isa. 66:1). Is it the earth, then, that He commands us to adore, since in this other place the earth is called the footstool of God's feet? ... I am put in jeopardy by such a dilemma: I am afraid to adore the earth lest He that made heaven and earth condemn me; again, I am afraid not to adore the footstool of my Lord's feet, but because the Psalm does say to me: "Adore the footstool of My feet." I ask what the footstool of His feet is; and Scripture tells me: "The earth is the footstool of My feet." Perplexed, I turn to Christ, because it is He whom I seek here; and I discover how the earth is adored without impiety, how without impiety the footstool of His feet is adored. For He received earth from earth; because flesh is from earth, and He took flesh from the flesh of Mary. He walked here in the same flesh, and gave us the same flesh to be eaten unto salvation. But no one eats that flesh unless he adores it; and thus it is discovered how such a footstool of the Lord's feet is adored; and not only do we not sin by adoring, we do sin by not adoring.

**419—Augustine, *The City of God*  
—Eucharist as Sacrifice—**

10:20 Thus [Christ] is both the Priest who offers and the Sacrifice offered. And He designed that there should be a daily sign of this in the sacrifice of the Church, which, being His body, learns to offer herself through Him.

- ca. 425—**Saint Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, Doctor of the Church, *Commentary on the Gospel of John***  
10:2 [on *John* 15:1] The Savior Himself declares, “Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood abides in Me and I in him” (*John* 6:56). By this statement it is to be seen that Christ does not say He will be in us only after the fashion of some relation that is solely intellectual, but also through a participation truly according to nature. Just as if someone were to entwine two pieces of wax together and melt them with a fire, so that both are made one, so too through participation in the Body of Christ and in His Precious Blood, He is united in us and we too in Him. In no other way can that corruptible nature be vivified except by being united bodily to the Body of Him who is, by His very nature, life: that is, the Only-begotten.
- 431—**Council of Ephesus, third ecumenical council, *Letter of Cyril to Nestorius***  
—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—  
We will necessarily add this also. Proclaiming the death, according to the flesh, of the Only-begotten Son of God, that is Jesus Christ, confessing his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, we offer the Unbloody Sacrifice in the churches, and so go on to the mystical thanksgivings, and are sanctified, having received his Holy Flesh and the Precious Blood of Christ the Saviour of us all. And not as common flesh do we receive it; God forbid: nor as of a man sanctified and associated with the Word according to the unity of worth, or as having a divine indwelling, but as truly the Life-giving and very flesh of the Word himself. For he is the Life according to his nature as God, and when he became united to his Flesh, he made it also to be Life-giving, as also he said to us: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood (*John* 6:53). For we must not think that it is flesh of a man like us (for how can the flesh of man be life-giving by its own nature?) but as having become truly the very own of him who for us both became and was called Son of Man.
- ca. 460—**Pope Saint Leo the Great, 45<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, Doctor of the Church, *The Great Sermon***  
91:3 When the Lord says: “Unless you shall have eaten the Flesh of the Son of Man and shall have drunk His Blood, you shall not have life in you” (*John* 6:53), you ought to so communicate at the Sacred Table that you have no doubt whatever of the truth of the Body and the

Blood of Christ. For that which is taken in the mouth is what is believed in faith; and in vain do those respond, “Amen,” who argue against that which is received.

- ca. 525—**Saint Fulgence, Bishop of Ruspe, *The Rule of Faith***  
—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—  
62 Hold most firmly and never doubt in the least that the Only-begotten God the Word Himself become flesh offered himself in an odor of sweetness as a Sacrifice and Victim to God on our behalf; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, in the time of the Old Testament animals were sacrificed by the patriarchs and prophets and priests; and to whom now, I mean in the time of the New Testament, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, with whom He has one Godhead, the Holy Catholic Church does not cease in faith and love to offer throughout all the lands of the world a Sacrifice of Bread and Wine ... In those former sacrifices what would be given us in the future was signified figuratively; but in this Sacrifice which has now been given us, it is shown plainly. In those former sacrifices it was fore-announced that the Son of God would be killed for the impious; but in the present it is announced that he has been killed for the impious.
- ca. 540—**Saint Caesar, Bishop of Arles, *Sermons***  
—*Necessity of a pure conscience to receive*—  
67 [261]:2 He [who asks for Penance] asks to be excommunicated, because he judges himself unworthy to receive the Eucharist of the Lord; and moreover, he wants to be excluded for some time from that altar so that he may merit to arrive with a clear conscience at the altar in heaven. Moreover, with great reverence he wants to be removed from the Body and Blood of Christ like a guilty and impious person, so that by his humility he may finally one day deserve to come to the Communion of the sacrosanct altar.
- 593—**Pope Saint Gregory the Great, 64<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, Doctor of the Church, *Dialogues***  
—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—  
4:60 This Victim alone saves the soul from eternal ruin, the sacrificing of which presents to us in a mystical way the death of the Only-begotten, who,—though He is now risen from the dead and dies no more, and death will no longer have dominion over Him, for He lives immortally and incorruptibly in Himself,—is immolated for us again in this mystery of the sacred oblation. For His body is eaten there, His



flesh is distributed among the people unto salvation, His blood is poured out, no longer in the hands of the faithless but in the mouth of the faithful. Let us take thought, therefore, of what this sacrifice means for us, which is in constant representation of the suffering of the Only-begotten Son, for the sake of our forgiveness.

—636, *Death of Saint Isidore of Seville, end of the patristic period in the West*

**ca. 645—Saint John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

Step 4:26 And I, like a most worthless person, did not miss the chance of tempting the old man. And when I asked him what he was thinking of when he was standing by the table, he said: "I thought of the shepherd as the image of Christ, and I considered that I had not received the command from him at all, but from God. And so I stood praying, Father John, not as before a table of men, but as before the altar of God ... ."

Step 18 [Evil doers] laugh when they see corpses. When they stand at prayer they are completely stony, hart and darkened. When they see the holy altar they feel nothing; when they partake of the Gift, it is as if they had eaten ordinary bread.

Step 28:52 If a body is changed in its activity from contact with another body, then how can he remain unchanged who touches the body of God with innocent hands?

**743—Saint John Damascene, Doctor of the Church, *The Source of Knowledge***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

3:4:13 For those who partake worthily and with faith, it is for the remission of sins and for life everlasting, and a safeguard to soul and body. ... The Bread and the Wine are not a type of the Body and Blood of Christ,—perish the thought!—but the deified Body Itself of the Lord, since the Lord Himself has said: "This is My Body." He did not say a type of His Body, but His Body; nor a type of His Blood, but His Blood (Matt. 26:26, 28). ... If some have called the bread and the wine antitypes of the Body and Blood of the Lord, as does the divinely inspired Basil, they said this not after the consecration but before the consecration, giving this name to the offering itself. ...

3:4:14 [In reference to the Eucharist] participation is spoken of, because through the Eucharist we participate in the divinity of Jesus.

Communion is likewise spoken of, and it is real communion, because through the Eucharist we have communion with Christ and share in His flesh and in His divinity. We do indeed have such communion thereby, that we are united with each other. For since we partake of one Bread we all become one body of Christ and one blood, and members of each other, since we become of one body with Christ. With all our strength, therefore, let us guard against receiving communion from heretics and from giving Communion to them. "Do not give that which is holy to the dogs," the Lord says, "nor cast your pearls before swine" (Matt. 7:6), lest we come to share in their dishonor and condemnation. For if this union is truly with Christ and with each other, certainly we are voluntarily united also with all who partake along with us.

—ca. 749, *Death of Saint John Damascene, end of the patristic period in the East*

**ca. 836—Rudolf of Fulda, *The Life of Saint Leoba***  
—*Viaticum ("Food for the Journey," Last Eucharist)*—

When she saw that her ailment was growing worse and that the hour of her death was near she sent for a saintly English priest named Torhthat, who had always been at her side and ministered to her with respect and love, and received from him the viaticum of the body and blood of Christ. Then she put off this earthly garment and gave back her soul joyfully to her Creator, clean and undefiled as she had received it from Him.

**866—Pope Saint Nicholas the Great, 105<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, *The Responses to the Questions of the Bulgars***

—*Necessity of a pure conscience to receive*—

99:35 [W]hen you decide to go forth into battle, do not fail to do what you yourselves have recalled, i.e., go to churches, carry out prayers, forgive sinners, be present at the solemnities of the Mass, offer oblations, make a confession of your sins to the priests, receive the reconciliation and communion. ...

99:65 Now then, no one is rightly permitted to receive the communion of Christ, if he is not found to be fasting. For if he is so given over to gluttony that he thinks so little of the mystical table, he seems to break the fast by first consuming secular food [as opposed to the spiritual food of the Mass]. Furthermore, because he does not distinguish between the venerable body and precious blood of Christ and all the other food, he is known to place

them not ahead of every human meal but rather behind. Indeed, the body of Christ is the health-bringing remedy against sin, and whoever does not consume it with veneration before eating all other things, does not desire to be healed but rather weakened. And certainly we see doctors everyday drinking their potions on an empty stomach; and if this is done for the health of the body, how much more should it be performed for the salvation of the soul.

**ca. 975—Roswitha of Gandersheim, Benedictine nun, earliest known female playwright, *The Passion of Saint Dionysius, the Illustrious Martyr***

But not even in the dark prison did the illustrious bishop cease to perform the worthy service of the Lord, but he zealously instructed the assembled people and duly celebrated the Holy Mysteries of the Mass. But when he was about to break the Sacred Bread, suddenly a strange light gleamed from the dismal cavern; in this light the glorious Ruler of the starry court, accompanied verily by an angelic host, appearing to him. Consoling His beloved son and giving to the bishop the Sacred Species, he comforted him saying: "Receive, my beloved, now My Sacred Body, of which I shall presently complete for thee the Sacred Mystery; for thy greatest reward remains with Me forever."

—1050, *condemnation of Berengarius of Tours, first orthodox theologian to dispute Transubstantiation*

—1054, *Start of the Eastern Schism*

**ca. 1070—Saint Peter Damian, Bishop of Ostia and Velletri, Doctor of the Church, *Sermon on the Nativity of Mary***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

45 For the same body of Christ which the most blessed Virgin brought forth, which she nourished in her womb, wrapped in swaddling clothes and brought up with motherly care: this same body, I say, and none other, we now perceive without any doubt on the sacred altar.

**1152—Saint Elisabeth of Schönau, *First Book of Visions***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice: ministerial priesthood*—

27 During ... Mass, when the sisters went forward to receive Eucharist and I was still sitting at a distance because of my weakened state, I looked into the chalice and I saw the true substance of blood. As they poured out the wine, I distinctly saw the difference between the blood and that which was added, until they

were mixed together so that the one color of blood appeared. On another day—I don't know which—a similar thing happened. I was seeing from afar—as was customary for me—everything being done around the altar during the Mass. As the priest blessed the chalice, behold, the dove, which I usually saw on the altar, slowly advanced, dipped its head in the chalice, and immediately the substance of blood appeared. ...

28 One day one of the brothers came bringing the divine sacrament of the Lord's body in a pyx for the benefit of a certain ailing sister. While I and several sisters with me were standing by and speaking with him, I looked at the pyx and thought about the dignity of that sacrament. Suddenly my heart was set free in such a way that I could hardly restrain myself from ecstasy. And behold, a great brightness shone in the pyx and I looked in—even though it was still closed—and the substance of true flesh appeared in it. Indeed, I tremble as I say these things, just as I trembled when I saw them. God is my witness that in saying all these things I have invented nothing nor sought my own glory.

**1179—Third Lateran Council, 11<sup>th</sup> ecumenical council, *Decree Concerning Papal Elections*—*Viaticum* ("Food for the Journey," *Last Eucharist*)—**

But if any one ... shall usurp for himself the name—the real authority he cannot—of a bishop: he himself, as well as those who shall have received him, shall be subject to excommunication, and shall be punished by the privation of all their holy orders; so that the holy Eucharist, except on their death-beds, shall be denied them.

**1208—Pope Innocent III, 176<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, *The Profession of Faith Prescribed for Durandus of Osca and Followers***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice: ministerial priesthood; necessity of a pure conscience to receive*—

... We, with a sincere heart, firmly and unhesitatingly believe and loyally affirm that the Sacrifice, that is, the bread and the wine ..., are the true body and the true blood of our Lord Jesus Christ after the consecration. ... [W]e firmly believe and confess that no matter how upright, religious, holy, and prudent someone may be, he cannot and should not consecrate the Eucharist nor perform the Sacrifice of the Altar, unless he is a priest rightly ordained by a bishop who can be seen and can be felt. ... [W]e firmly believe and

profess that whoever believes and maintains that he can perform the Sacrifice of the Eucharist without previously being ordained by a bishop, as we have mentioned, is a heretic, and he shares in the destruction of Core and his accomplices (see Num. 16), and is to be excluded from the entire holy Roman Church. We believe that God grants pardon to all truly repentant sinners and we are most glad to join in communion with them. We consider that the anointing of the sick with the consecrated oil is a holy thing.

—1215, *Transubstantiation is dogmatically defined in the Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council*

**1377-1378—Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church, *The Dialogue***

—*Ministerial priesthood*—

66 [*God the Father*.:] This food gives more or less strength according to the desire of those who receive it, whether they receive it sacramentally or virtually. “Sacramentally” is when one communicates in the holy Sacrament. “Virtually” is communicating through holy desire, both in longing for communion and in esteem for the blood of Christ crucified. ...

111 ... I revealed this to you when you had set yourself to resist the battle the devil was giving you in this sacrament, to make you grow in love and in light of most holy faith. You know that you had gone to the church at dawn to hear Mass, and that before that the devil had been tormenting you. You went to stand at the altar beside the crucifix, though the priest had come out to Mary’s altar. You stood there considering your sinfulness, fearing that you might have offended me while the devil had been troubling you. And you were considering also how great was my charity that I should have made you worthy to hear Mass at all, since you considered yourself unworthy even to enter my temple. When the celebrant reached the consecration you looked up toward him. And at the words of consecration I revealed myself to you. You saw a ray of light coming from my breast, like the ray that comes forth from the sun’s circle yet never leaves it. Within this light came a dove, and dove and light were as one and hovered over the host by the power of the words of consecration the celebrant was saying. Your bodily eyes could not endure the light, and only your spiritual vision remained, but there you saw and tasted the depths of the Trinity, wholly God, wholly human, hidden and veiled under that

whiteness. Neither the light nor the presence of the Word, whom in spirit you saw in this whiteness, took away the whiteness of the bread. Nor did the one stand in the way of the other. I did not block your sight either of me, God and human, in that bread, or of the bread itself. Neither the whiteness nor the feel nor the taste was taken away from the bread.

**1418—Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ***  
—*Necessity of a pure conscience to receive*—  
4:1 *On the Deep Reverence with which Christ should be Received*

THE DISCIPLE. O Christ, Eternal Truth, these are Your own words [i.e., the author earlier cites Matt. 11:28; John 6:51, 56, 63; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24], although not spoken all at one time or in one place. And since they are Your words, and are true, I must accept them with gratitude and trust. They are Your words, and You have spoken them; they are also mine, since You have given them to me for my salvation. Gladly do I receive them from Your lips, that they may be the more deeply imprinted in my heart. Your words, so tender, so full of sweetness and love, give me courage; but my own sins appall me, and a stricken conscience restrains me from receiving so high a Sacrament [as that of Holy Communion]. ...

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

When visiting such places, men are often moved by curiosity and the urge for sight-seeing, and one seldom hears that any amendment of life results, especially as their conversation is trivial and lacks true contrition. But here, in the Sacrament of the Altar, You are wholly present, my God, the Man Christ Jesus; here we freely partake the fruit of eternal salvation, as often as we receive You worthily and devoutly. No levity, curiosity, or sentimentality must draw us, but firm faith, devout hope, and sincere love.

—1517, *Start of the Protestant Revolt*

**1562—Council of Trent, 19<sup>th</sup> ecumenical council, *Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

1 Since under the former Testament, according to the testimony of the Apostle Paul, there was no perfection because of the weakness of the Levitical priesthood, there was need, God the Father of mercies so ordaining, *that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchisedech* (Heb. 7:11), our Lord Jesus Christ, who might perfect and lead to perfection as

many as were to be sanctified. He, therefore, our God and Lord, though He was by His death about to offer Himself once upon the altar of the cross to God the Father that He might there accomplish an eternal redemption, nevertheless, that His priesthood might not come to an end with His death, at the last supper, on the night He was betrayed, that He might leave to His beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody sacrifice once to be accomplished on the cross might be represented, the memory thereof remain even to the end of the world, and its salutary effects applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit, declaring Himself constituted a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6), offered up to God the Father His own body and blood under the form of bread and wine, and under the forms of those same things gave to the Apostles, whom He then made priests of the New Testament, that they might partake, commanding them and their successors in the priesthood by these words to do likewise: *Do this in commemoration of me*, as the Catholic Church has always understood and taught.

**1619—Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, Doctor of the Church, *Introduction to the Devout Life***

—*Eucharist*—

2:20 Our Savior has instituted the most august sacrament of the Eucharist, which contains his flesh and blood in their reality, so that whoever eats of it shall live forever (John 6:50, 59). Therefore whoever turns to it frequently and devoutly so effectively builds up his soul's health that it is almost impossible for him to be poisoned by evil affection of any kind. We cannot be nourished by this flesh of life and live on the affections of death. Just as men dwelling the earthly paradise might have avoided bodily death by power of that living fruit which God had planted in it, so also they can avoid spiritual death by virtue of this sacrament of life. If fruits that are tenderest and most subject to decay, such as cherries, apricots, and strawberries, can be easily preserved for a whole year with sugar or honey, it is no wonder if our hearts, no matter how frail and weak, are preserved from the corruption of sin when sweetened by the incorruptible flesh and blood of the Son of God. Philothea, those Christians who will be damned will stand without any defense when the just Judge shows them their crime in

suffering spiritual death. It was easy for them to have kept themselves in life and health by eating his body, which he left them for that purpose. "Wretched men," he will say, "why did you die when you had the fruit and the meat of life at your command?"

**1795—Charles Joseph Quadrupani, Barnabite priest, *Instructions for Pious Souls***

—*Necessity of a pure conscience to receive*—

6:3 Temerity does not consist in approaching the Altar frequently, but in approaching it unworthily were this but once in an entire lifetime. ... Why then regulate the number of Communion by the law of time, instead of by purity of conscience, which should alone indicate how many times to receive? This Divine Mystery is nothing more at Easter than at all other seasons during which it is celebrated continually. It is ever the same, that is to say, ever the same gift of the Holy Ghost. Easter continues throughout the year. You who are initiated will understand perfectly what I say. Be it Saturday, or Sunday, of the feasts of the martyrs, it is always the same Victim, the same Sacrifice. It was not the will of our divine Lord that His Sacrifice should be restricted by the observance of time. ...

6:5 Do not conclude that you derive no benefit from Holy Communion because you find no perceptible increase in your virtues. Consider that it at least serves to keep you in a state of grace. You give nourishment to your body every day but you do not pretend to say that it daily gains in strength. Does food appear useless to you on that account? Certainly not; for, though it fail to augment strength, it preserves it by repairing the constant waste. Now, this is precisely the case with the divine Food of our souls.

**1858—Venerable Pope Pius IX, 256<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, *Amantissimi Redemptoris***

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice: ministerial priesthood*—

[Christ] decreed that that same sacrifice which He performed ... be renewed and take place daily by the ministry of the priesthood ... that the salvific and most abundant fruits of His passion might forever be dispersed upon mankind.

**1947—Pope Pius XII, 260<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, *Mediator Dei***

116 The Church, as the teacher of truth, strives by every means in her power to safeguard the integrity of the Catholic faith, and like a mother solicitous for the welfare of her

children, she exhorts them most earnestly to partake fervently and frequently of the richest treasure of our religion.

117 She wishes in the first place that Christians—especially when they cannot easily receive Holy Communion—should do so at least by desire, so that with renewed faith, reverence, humility and complete trust in the goodness of the Divine Redeemer, they may be united to Him in the spirit of the most ardent charity.

—*Eucharist as Sacrifice*—

118 But the desire of Mother Church does not stop here. For since by feasting upon the Bread of Angels we can by a “sacramental” Communion, as we have already said, also become partakers of the Sacrifice, she repeats the invitation to all her children individually “Take and eat ... Do this in memory of Me” (1 Cor. 11:24) so that “we may continually experience within us the fruit of our Redemption” (*Roman Missal*, Collecta Festi Corp. Christi.) in a more efficacious manner. ...

129 The Eucharistic Food contains, as all are aware, “truly, really and substantially the Body and Blood together with the Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (Council of Trent, thirteenth session, Canon 1). It is no wonder, then, that the Church, even from the beginning, adored the Body of Christ under the appearance of bread; this is evident from the very rites of the august Sacrifice, which prescribe that the sacred ministers should adore the Most Holy Sacrament by genuflecting or by profoundly bowing their heads.

130 The Sacred Councils teach that it is the Church’s tradition right from the beginning, to worship “with the same adoration the Word Incarnate as well as His own flesh” (Second Council of Constantinople, *Anath. De trib. Capit.*, canon 9), and St. Augustine asserts that: “No one eats that flesh, without first adoring it,” while he adds that “not only do we not commit a sin by adoring it, but that we do sin by not adoring it” (cf. *Explanations of the Psalms* 98:9).

**2003—Pope Saint John Paul the Great, 264<sup>th</sup>**

**Bishop of Rome, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia***

56 What must Mary have felt as she heard from the mouth of Peter, John, James and the other apostles the words spoken at the Last Supper: “This is my body which is given for you” (Luke 22:19)? The body given up for us and made present under the sacramental signs was the same body which she had conceived in her womb! For Mary, receiving the Eucharist must have somehow meant welcoming once more into her womb that heart which had beat in unison with hers and reliving what she had experienced at the foot of the cross.