

THE REAL PRESENCE OF OUR LORD
IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST

I. INTRODUCTION. a. Belief in the *real presence* of our Lord in the Eucharist:

- 1) A core element of Catholic doctrine (See Appendix: Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)).
- 2) Spread rapidly among 1st generation Christians (See Appendix : 1Cor 11:23-26).
- 3) Unanimous among Church Fathers (Clement A.D. 88-97; Ignatius, A.D. 107; Liturgy, A.D.100).
 - b. Stumbling block, “hard saying” for Jesus’ disciples; many Protestants; and Catholics.
 - c. **Objective.** 1) Explore 1st Cen Jewish beliefs/religious traditions as Jesus’ context
- 2) Gain insight how/why 1st Gen. Christians (mostly Jews) rapidly accepted *real presence*
- 3) Deepen our faith that the Blessed Sacrament is truly the “ Face of God;” truly present.

II. RELEVANT 1ST CENTURY JEWISH BELIEFS, TRADITIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

a. **New Exodus:** Central and unifying hope of ancient Judaism of New Covenant foretold by prophets:

- 1) New Deliverer.
- 2) New Release.
- 3) New Journey.
- 4) New Temple.
- 5) New Destination.

b. **New Passover:** -- to have a new Exodus, must have new Passover.

- 1) Old Testament (OT) Passover (Exodus: 12): ritual sacrifice of lamb by father as priest.
- 2) Passover at time of Jesus: sacrifice of lamb by priests at Jerusalem Temple
 - Catechesis: “Why is this night different?” “Why do we eat this meal?”
 - Participation: Belief in spiritual participation in the first Passover/Exodus.
“Because of what the Lord did for *me* when *I* came out of Egypt.” (Ex 13:8).
- 3) Last Supper: New sacrifice of bread (body) and wine (blood) offered in New Covenant,
In which Jesus is both:
 - Priest: assumes role of priest (Matt: 24; Mk: 14; Lk: 22)
 - Lamb: Jesus replaces OT sacrificial lamb with himself as sacrificial victim.

4) 1st Gen Jewish Christians : Readily believed that Eucharist is Jesus' body and blood, because:

- Understood they were participating in the New Passover of Jesus
- To complete the Passover sacrifice, must eat the Passover Lamb!

St. Paul: "Christ our Paschal Lamb has been sacrificed... Let us keep the feast (1Cor 5:7-8)."

5) Implications: Every Mass brings us back sacramentally to the first night of the New Exodus:

- Just as every OT Passover meal somehow allowed Jews to participate in 1st Passover,
- we believe that every Eucharist somehow allows us to participate in the 1st Eucharist
- and we are set free from sin and death.

c. New Manna: Jesus explains New Manna in two places:

1) The Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread..." (Matt 6:11; Luke 11:3).

a) Two questions: 1) What kind of bread? 2) Why the redundancy?

b) "Bread" alludes to OT Manna which was both daily and supernatural.

- 1) "daily" = new Greek word used only in Lord's Prayer : "**epi-ousios** bread "
- 2) Greek 'epi' = 'on, above;' 'ousios' = 'substance, essence, nature.'
- 3) St Jerome's Latin Vulgate translated *epiousios* as "supersubstantial" bread.
--both 'daily' and 'supernatural, just as the OT Manna ; i.e., miraculous!

c) (**CCC 2837**) " Taken literally, (epiousios = "super-essential" refers directly to the Bread of Life; the body of Christ."

2) The Bread of Life Discourse (John 6: 46-64) (See Appendix for text).

3) 1st Century Jewish Christians: came to believe Eucharist is Jesus' body and blood , by the time of John's Gospel because they saw the Eucharist as the New Manna for the New Exodus journey.

a) New Manna must be superior to Old Manna; = Eucharist could not be ordinary bread. If OT Manna was miraculous; supernatural (as 1st Century Jews believed), New Manna must be as well.

b) Eucharist as the New Manna is not simply Jesus crucified body and blood.

1) Jesus spoke of his flesh, crucified *and* resurrected: "What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?"

2) Luke 24 (Road to Emmaus): Jesus' risen body unconstrained by time or space.

4) Implications: The Resurrection is key to understanding the Eucharist:

a) When we receive the Eucharist, we receive Jesus' crucified and risen body and blood which he took into Heaven in his Ascension.

b) In Heaven, Jesus offers that crucified and risen body and blood in an eternal sacrifice which is made present on every altar at every Mass, until the end of time.

d. New Bread of the Presence. Jesus instituted the Eucharist as a sign of his personal presence.

1) OT Bread of the Presence (Exodus 25) (mis-translated as "Showbread," "Shewbread")

-- "Bread of the Presence:" literally, "Bread of the Face" (Heb. *lehem ha panim*)

a) One of Three Key Symbols of God's presence in the OT Tabernacle (Exodus 25: 10-40).

-- Ark of the Covenant: Throne of Invisible God

-- Menorah (Golden Lampstand): Seven Tongues of Fire

-- Bread of the Presence : Set on Golden Table with Menorah, in front of Ark.

b) Old Testament Liturgy of the Bread of the Presence (Lev 24: 1-9)

-- 12 Cakes of Bread set out Priests each Sabbath on behalf of Israel

-- Week-old Cakes offered and consumed by Priests with wine in unbloody sacrifice

-- A perpetual offering to be set before the Lord, "as a covenant forever."

-- Menorah candles were "kept burning continually" with the Bread of the Presence.

-- Bread of the Presence veiled when carried out of Tabernacle (Num. 4: 1-15).

2) Bread of the Presence at Time of Jesus:

-- Rabbinic belief that Bread was miraculous; that the Lord was present, somehow.

-- Sabbath sacrifice of Bread with wine offered as a remembrance to the Lord.

-- Bread lifted up for pilgrims to see, 3x/yr.; "Behold God's love for you!"

3) The New Bread of the Presence. (Matt 12:1-8) (See Appendix)

- Jesus is the New Temple (“I tell you, something greater than the Temple is here.”)
- OT Temple believed to be the dwelling place of God on earth
- Disciples (Apostles) are New Priests – Not by bloodline but relationship to Jesus.
- They will offer the Eucharist as the New Bread of the Presence.

4) 1st Century Jewish Christians: Understood the Eucharist was the New Bread of the Presence:

- If old Bread of Presence communicated presence of God, the New Bread of the Presence would do this in a even greater way.
- John 2: 19-22 “they did not understand that he was speaking of the temple of his body.”
- Jesus is God on earth; his body is God with us.
- If Jesus’ earthly body is new Temple, so must be his Eucharistic Body.
- Eucharist is the New Temple of the New Exodus; ultimate destination for Jews and Gentiles...

5) Implications: a) Eucharist somehow takes us back to the **New Passover** of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion. Thus, as Jews could say of the OT Passover, we each celebrate Eucharist because of “what the Lord did for me, when I came out of Egypt.”

b) Eucharist also looks forward to the Resurrection of the Body. As we journey to the New Promised Land, God has given us **New Manna** as a foretaste of the World to Come.

c) As the **New Bread of the Presence**, Jesus in the Eucharist comes to dwell with us now, so we can be sustained and draw on his presence at Mass; in the Tabernacle; in Eucharistic adoration, as we look upon the “Face of God.”

III. CONCLUSIONS: 1) Relatively few doctrinal disputes over Real Presence in first Millennium’

2) If accept Nicene Creed regarding the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the Trinity, the miraculous real presence of our Lord in the Eucharist should be relatively non-controversial...

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5. Salza, John. The Biblical Basis for the Eucharist. Huntington, IN: Sunday Visitor Press, 2008.