

Eucharistic Adoration

Christians have always believed that Eucharist is the true body and blood of Christ. The word “*transubstantiation*” is used to explain what happens to the bread and wine during the celebration of the Mass. The Church teaches that the whole substance of the bread changes into the Body of Christ, and that the whole substance of the wine changes into the Blood of Christ. Once this occurs, then the Eucharistic elements only “appear” to be bread and wine; they no longer remain ordinary bread and ordinary wine. As such, the Eucharist is “*truly, really and substantially the Body and Blood together with the Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

In Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians we find an affirmation of the early Church's understanding of the Eucharist as the Body and Blood of Jesus. He wrote: “*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.’*” (1 Corinthians 11: 24-25).

From the earliest days of the Church, the Eucharist was reserved in the chapels of monks and nuns. The principal reason for reserving the Eucharist was so that it would be available for those who were sick or dying. Because of the sacred nature of the Eucharist, it was set aside in special places of reservation. These places soon became the focus of devotion and worship.

In 1264 Pope Urban IV countered those who challenged the ancient belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist by establishing the *Feast of Corpus Christi*. The Pope, responding to the words of Jesus in which he promised to be present to his followers until the end of the world, proclaimed that the Eucharist should be adored as the very physical presence of Jesus among his people. Since that time, devotion to the reserved Eucharist in the *tabernacle* has been common in the Roman Catholic Church.

During Eucharistic Adoration, the Sacred Host is placed in a special container called a *monstrance* so that all may gaze upon and worship the Blessed Sacrament. When Catholics worship Jesus during Eucharistic Adoration they believe that they are in his very presence. At the conclusion of the devotion, a blessing or “*benediction*” is given. During the *Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament* the Eucharist is raised up and the blessing is given. Catholics believe that Jesus himself gives this blessing. For this reason the priest or deacon wears a special garment called a “*humeral veil.*” The veil covers the minister's hands and emphasizes that it is not he who gives the blessing, but rather it is from the Lord Jesus himself.