



New Words That Bring Light **by Joe Sixpack**

A little girl named Ann and her father were non-Catholics who were visiting New York City. Ann was very interested in visiting different kinds of churches, so her father took her into a non-Catholic church where they admired the organ, stained glass windows and the intricately hand-carved pulpit.

Then they went into a Catholic church, and the first thing Ann noticed was the little red sanctuary lamp. She asked, "Daddy, what's the little red light for?" Her father explained that it was a sign that Jesus was present in this church.

"But where is Jesus?" she asked.

"Behind the golden door you see on the altar."

"No wonder it feels so holy in this church. But does He ever come out of the little golden door?"

"Yes, the priest takes Him out every morning when the people come to Mass and receive Him in Holy Communion."

"Can I received Jesus, Daddy?" Ann asked longingly.

"Oh, no! You're not a Catholic. But let's go now; we've seen enough of this church."

When they went to another non-Catholic church, the first thing from Ann was, "Daddy, where's the little red light?" She was disappointed and begged, "Daddy, let's go back to the church where Jesus lives."

Those words from his little daughter kept ringing in the father's ears for a long time, until he finally made up his mind to become Catholic. He, too, wanted to belong to the church where Jesus is really and truly present under the appearances of bread and wine. Ann and her father were baptized, and later her mother also became a Catholic. Years later when Ann was a grown woman, her old father was dying. The last thing he said to his daughter was, "Ann, thank you for leading me to the Church where Jesus lives."

People of all denominations call their places of worship a house of God, but it is only in Catholic churches where God truly lives. Yes, He is present in all places, but Jesus, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, lives only in Catholic churches. That is why we genuflect when we enter the church, because we are paying homage to King Jesus in the Tabernacle, and we know He's present because the red sanctuary lamp tells us so.

It is in the Holy Eucharist that Jesus gives us Himself, under the appearances of bread and wine, fully and completely. He is truly present in His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, in order to give Himself to the Father for our salvation, and to give Himself to us as divine nourishment for our souls.

But as thinking people, we have to ask ourselves how this can be. After all, what we see is bread and wine, so how can this be Jesus? Well, the answer to that question leads us to what may be a new word for some of you: transubstantiation. Transubstantiation is the change of the entire substance of the bread and the entire substance of the wine into the real body and blood of Jesus Christ. Breaking down the word we see it thusly: trans=to move or change; substanti=from the word substance; ation=a suffix denoting the taking place of an action. Resultantly, transubstantiation is the changing of the substance. The appearances of bread and wine are called *accidentals*, but even though it looks like bread and wine it is really the Body and Blood of Christ.

Non-Catholics falsely charge that transubstantiation is an “invention” of the Catholic Church. The origin of this charge comes from a book by Loraine Boettner called *Roman Catholicism*.¹ This book is often referred to as the anti-Catholic bible.

Boettner charges that transubstantiation was an “invention” by the pope in AD 1215. The fact is, transubstantiation is merely a technical term used to describe what happens at the Consecration during Mass when the bread and wine are turned into the Body and Blood of Christ. As we learned last week, this belief comes from the 6th chapter of John’s Gospel, the 11th chapter of 1 Corinthians, and the accounts of the Last Supper in the Gospels. So the Church has always believed that the bread and wine used at Mass become the Body and Blood of Christ during the Consecration.

As centuries passed, theologians exercised their reason on this issue to understand how such a thing could happen and its implications. Some of them, though, in trying to explain the Real Presence of Christ, developed unsound theories, so it soon became apparent that more precise terminology was necessary to guarantee the integrity of the Sacrament. The word *transubstantiation* was finally chosen for that terminology, and the term was formally imposed at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Therefore, the use of the word was new, but the belief is as old as the Bride of Christ, the Church, herself.

The whole Christ in His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—true God and true man—is truly present after the transubstantiation. Indeed, the whole Christ is present in each particle of the consecrated bread and each drop of the consecrated wine, which is why it isn’t necessary to receive both a Host and from the chalice. You receive all of Jesus from either species.

The Most Holy Eucharist is what we call a mystery of faith. That doesn’t mean we are empty-headed people who check our brains at the church door. A mystery of faith is a supernatural truth which we cannot completely understand, but we firmly believe because we trust the authority of the one who revealed it, who is God Himself.

God has deigned over the centuries to endorse His own institution of the Eucharist through many wonderful miracles. I urge you to go online and check out some of them: the Eucharistic miracle of Lanciano, Orvieto, and others. There are also several great books and videos on the topic, such as *Eucharistic Miracles* by Joan Carol Cruz and *This is My Body* by Bob and Penny Lord.

As we continue learning about the Holy Eucharist in this series, next week we will begin to focus on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We will see how it is a sacrifice, the purpose and effects of the Mass, the parts of the Mass, and Holy Communion. We will also focus on the respect we owe Jesus in the Mass and Communion, because this is What We Believe...Why We Believe It.

Got a question? Go to JoeSixpackAnswers.com.

¹ *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962)