

20th Sunday: Eucharistic Talk III “**Eucharist, the food for eternal life**”

‘Forsake foolishness and advance in the way of understanding; let whoever is simple turn in here’ *Prov. 1: 4,6*. Paul says: “therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord” *Eph. 5:16*. *Jesus says* “Whoever eats this bread will live forever” *Jn 6:58*.

“*Fides querens Intellectum*” = “Faith Seeking Understanding” is the motto of St. Anselm of Canterbury, a Benedictine monk of 11th century, Theologian, scholar and Archbp. of Canterbury, who was known throughout Europe for his great intelligence, as great scholar and strategist. It well articulates the close relationship between faith and human reason. St. Anselm believed that faith and reason are both essential to understanding, and that faith motivates believers to seek understanding out of a desire to know and love God.

The knowledge of God is far more precious than any other, Faith in God leads to a search for deeper understanding of the mysteries of faith. This motto is a reminder to all Christians to seek God not only with our hearts but with our minds as well. He said: “When reason, enlightened by faith, seeks its object with diligence, reverence, and moderation, it attains by God's gift, the true understanding”. *Pope Francis added; “When we speak of knowledge, we immediately think of man’s capacity to learn more and more about the reality that surrounds him and to discover the laws that regulate nature and the universe. The knowledge that comes from the Holy Spirit, however, is not limited to human knowledge; it is a special gift, which leads us to grasp, through creation, the greatness and love of God...”*

(Bible and Fathers of the Church’s understanding the Miracle Eucharistic) When we speak about the Catholic teaching and tradition about the real presence, we also need to know that there were many who denied it. (Church said no to 10th C., *Berengarius of Tours*, making him swear the oath: “The Bread and wine, placed on the altar, after consecration, are not only a sacrament-*signum*-but the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ”)

13th C: St. Thomas Aquinas, the church calls him “Common Doctor”, as there is something unique about the depth and breadth in his reflection on Eucharist that has permanent importance in the life of the Church.

a) His personal relationship with the Eucharist, which was profound and intense. He used to celebrate two masses; one he presided and then one he assisted. He hardly concluded Masses without shedding copious tears, manifesting his vividly personal relationship with Euch. After writing the masterpiece of treatise on Eucharist, he would say, “I have not done justice to this greatest sacrament”. Places his text before the crucifix and poses his head there: (the story) of Jesus from the crucifix speaking to him “Thomas, you have written well about me”. What would you have in reward? Thomas replied: “I have nothing, except you, O Lord”.

b) *Summa Theologiae* 3rd Bk. (Articles: 73-83) 73 & **75** on Eucharist

Is the Eucharist a sacrament? / sign? He starts calling it “*Alimentum Spirituale*”- *spiritual food* for the soul. St. Thomas uses three terms for Euch. -*Sacrificium* (past) *Communio* (present) *Viaticum* (future-food for the final journey to heaven)- Aquinas asks the question himself: ‘Whether in this sacrament of Eucharist, the Body of Christ is present according to truth or only according to figure/sign? He affirmed that it’s there according to truth. (*secundum veritatem*). It’s here that he spoke about “*Transubstantiation*”, with the help of Aristotelian Philosophy- of Substance and Accidents- about which we spoke last Sunday.

We know that 16th century, the great century of Protestant-Catholic debate: Martin Luther never liked or accepted Thomas Aquinas and his teaching about Eucharist. Luther said: the bread and wine are the bread and wine, even after consecration. His theory of “*impanation*” or “*companionation*” – ‘with the bread’-says, ‘the presence of Christ is added to them’. But, for us Church/Catholics, it is not ‘bread and then Jesus’ presence added to it’.

Finally, the council of Trent solemnly established 11 Canons on holy Eucharist: (We are to say that-) “If anyone were to deny that the Body, blood, soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is contained Truly, Really and Substantially in the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, be condemned

“Jesus’ presence is called ‘real’ by which it is not intended to exclude all other presence as if they could not be ‘real too’, but because it is presence in the “fullest sense”, that is to say, it is a *Substantial presence* by which Christ- the God-Man, is wholly and entirely present”.

B&S, there is something more going on in the Eucharist, than any other sacraments of the Church. Eg: At Baptism/Confirm: we do not say about water: “this is no more the water”, or at confirmation-“this is no more the oil”; instead, at the holy Mass, yes, ‘this is no more, the bread and wine, but “The Body and Blood of Christ”. EMHCs either do not say: I will go to the ‘bread station, or wine station’.

From John Chap 6 to Paul VI – 20 centuries, Church always believed and taught it: Feuerbach-founder of atheism said: *Man becomes, what he eats*. If we are what we eat, as we eat the very Body and Blood of Jesus, not as fake symbols, but truly, really and substantially, we become what we eat. We become conformed to him; we become Christified. And that is why the doctrine of ‘Real Presence in the Eucharist’ matters so much for us. And that is why, you who are listening to me should make it a very high priority in your life; not only to believe in it, but to teach it and teach it again and again. Amen.