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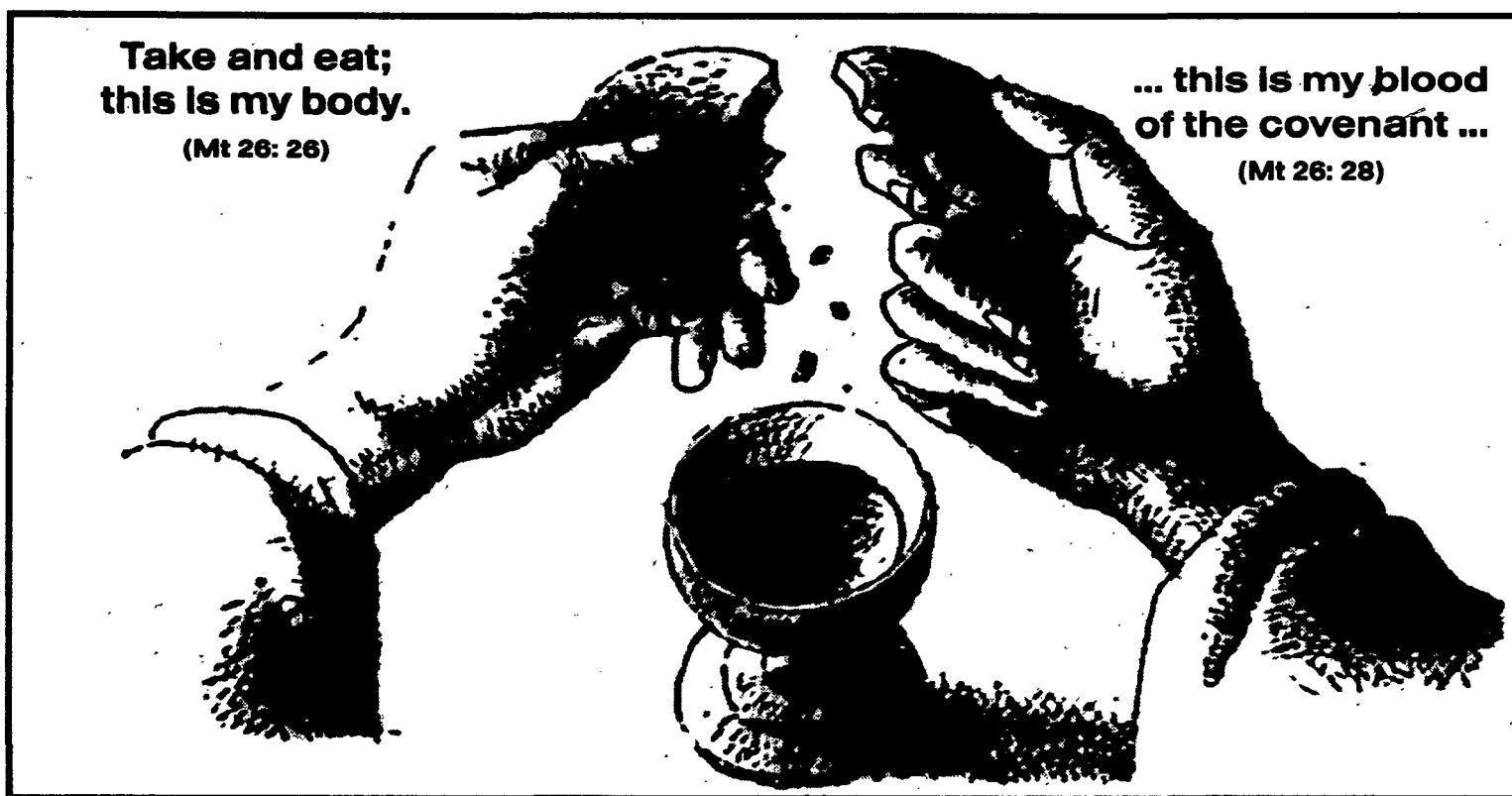


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Fallacies distort eucharistic beliefs

A Lutheran friend attends Mass with you: Under normal circumstances, may that friend receive Communion with you that day?

More than just a symbol, the Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ: True or False.

You haven't been to confession in a few months, but you haven't committed any serious sins: May you go to Communion?

A divorced Catholic may not receive Communion, even if he or she has not remarried: True or False?

You are attending a wedding at an Episcopal church: Is it permissible for you to receive Communion?

The answers are, respectively, No, True, Yes, False and No.

But if you asked a cross section of Catholics such questions, you might get widely varying answers.

Indeed, Joan Workmaster, director of the Office of Liturgy of the Diocese of Rochester, when asked if confusion exists about basic Catholic teachings concerning the Eucharist, responded affirmatively with a hearty laugh.

"A lot of people have a little of the truth, but not everybody has all of it," she commented. "Even some of the priests of the diocese say (of some teachings), 'No, that can't be true.' Oh, yes it is."

Disturbing surveys

How much confusion exists has become obvious through the diocese's ongoing eucharistic discussions in parishes, she acknowledged. The latest manifestation of that process is "The Centrality of the Sunday Eucharist: Guidelines for Parish Planning." The document, released June 25, is being published in the *Catholic Courier* (see Page 2).

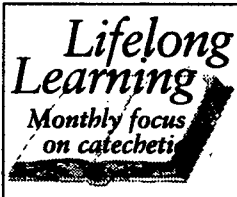
In particular, Workmaster said, "There's a lot of confusion over the whole issue of Real Presence, how that is defined and understood."

This confusion over a key Catholic teaching — that during the Mass the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ — also became clear as liturgy office staff conducted evaluations of Sunday liturgies at parishes over the past 1½ years, she added.

At the eight parishes studied thus far, parishioners filled out evaluation forms. One question on the form dealt with people's understanding that the bread and wine change into the body and blood of Christ.

"It's interesting the number of people, 60 to 65 percent, who have indicated they do not believe this," Workmaster said. Those results were consistent from parish to parish, and between age groups, she added.

Those results parallel those of a poll conducted by the *New York Times*/CBS News in April 1994. Catholics were asked if they be-



lieved that during the Mass the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, or that the bread and wine are just symbolic reminders of Jesus.

Of the Catholics surveyed, 34 percent responded that they believe the bread and wine are changed, 63 percent that they are just symbolic reminders.

"That's frightening," said Sister Ann Rehrauer, OSF, associate director of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' liturgy committee, regarding such survey results.

The surveys, she said, indicate "we have some major work in helping people to understand what happens when we celebrate the Eucharist."

Pastors act

Father William Cosgrove had heard of surveys indicating such confusion over a basic teaching of the church.

"I found it hard to believe," he acknowledged.

Still, the pastor of St. Dominic's Parish in Shortsville decided to take some action to educate people. In June's "Liturgy Corner" in the parish's bulletin, he tackled the issue head-on.

"Roman Catholics must believe in the REAL Presence, i.e., that Jesus' Body and Blood, Jesus Himself, in His risen humanity and sublime divinity is TRULY, REALLY, SUBSTANTIALLY PRESENT beneath the appearances of bread and wine," he wrote.

"Right from the beginning that was the teaching," Father Cosgrove said in an interview with the *Courier*.

Indeed, the Catechism of the Catholic Church is clear about what happens at the Mass.

"At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, by the word of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood." (paragraph 1333)

Father Leo Reinhardt, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish, Clyde, and St. Patrick's Parish, Savannah, included in his June 1 bulletin instructions concerning proper reverence while receiving Communion because it is the body and blood of Christ. He was blunt when assessing the fact that people come to Communion while not understanding the nature of the Eucharist.

"If people don't understand what they are receiving, if they think it's just a symbol, aren't we doing a disservice to it?" he said in an interview with the *Courier*.

Intercommunion limited

Other parts of the church's eucharistic teachings also are not understood, particularly those pertaining to intercommunion.

According to the catechism, not only is the Eucharist the body and blood of Christ, "the Eucharist is properly the sacrament of

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