

#### Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) *Summa Theologica*

**Canon I.** There is one Universal Church of the faithful, outside of which there is absolutely no salvation. In which there is the same priest and sacrifice, Jesus Christ, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine; the bread being changed (*transsubstantiatio*) by divine power into the body, and the wine into the blood, so that to realize the mystery of unity we may receive of Him what He has received of us. And this sacrament no one can effect except the priest who has been duly ordained in accordance with the keys of the Church, which Jesus Christ Himself gave to the Apostles and their successors.

**Thomas:** This sacrament has a threefold significance. one with regard to the past, inasmuch as it is commemorative of our Lord's Passion, which was a true sacrifice, and in this respect it is called a "Sacrifice." With regard to the present it has another meaning, namely, that of Ecclesiastical unity, in which men are aggregated through this Sacrament; and in this respect it is called "Communion." With regard to the future it has a third meaning, inasmuch as this sacrament foreshadows the Divine fruition, which shall come to pass in heaven; and according to this it is called "Viaticum" ["provisions on the way"], because it supplies the way of winning thither. And in this respect it is also called the "Eucharist," that is, "good grace," because "the grace of God is life everlasting" (Rom. 6:23); or because it really contains Christ, Who is "full of grace."

The presence of Christ's true body and blood in this sacrament cannot be detected by sense, nor understanding, but by faith alone, which rests upon Divine authority. Some men accordingly, not paying heed to these things, have contended that Christ's body and blood are not in this sacrament except as in a sign, a thing to be rejected as heretical, since it is contrary to Christ's words. Hence Berengarius, who had been the first deviser of this heresy, was afterwards forced to withdraw his error, and to acknowledge the truth of the faith.

Since Christ's true body is in this sacrament, and since it does not begin to be there by local motion, nor is it contained therein as in a place, it must be said then that it begins to be there by conversion of the substance of bread into itself. Yet this change is not like natural changes, but is entirely supernatural, and effected by God's power alone; . . . for the whole substance of the bread is changed into the whole substance of Christ's body, and the whole substance of the wine into the whole substance of Christ's blood. Hence this is not a formal, but a substantial conversion; nor is it a kind of natural movement: but, with a name of its own, it can be called "transubstantiation."

It is evident to sense that all the accidents of the bread and wine remain after the consecration. And this is reasonably done by Divine providence. First of all, because it is not customary, but horrible, for men to eat human flesh, and to drink blood. And therefore Christ's flesh and blood are set before us to be partaken of under the species of those things which are the more commonly used by men, namely, bread and wine. Secondly, lest this sacrament might be derided by unbelievers, if we were to eat our Lord under His own species. Thirdly, that while we receive our Lord's body and blood invisibly, this may redound to the merit of faith.

The effect of this sacrament ought to be considered, first of all and principally, from what is contained in this sacrament, which is Christ; Who, just as by coming into the world, He visibly bestowed the life of grace upon the world. Secondly, it is considered on the part of what is represented by this sacrament, which is Christ's Passion. And therefore this sacrament works in man the effect which Christ's Passion wrought in the world. Thirdly, the effect of this sacrament is considered from the way in which this sacrament is given; for it is given by way of food and drink. And therefore this sacrament does for the spiritual life all that material food does for the bodily life, namely, by sustaining, giving increase, restoring, and giving delight. Fourthly, the effect of this sacrament is considered from the species under which it is given. Hence Augustine says (Tract. xxvi in Joan.): "O sacrament of piety, O sign of unity, O bond of charity!" And since Christ and His Passion are the cause of grace. and since spiritual refreshment and charity cannot be without grace, it is clear from all that has been set forth that this sacrament bestows grace.

This sacrament is both a sacrifice and a sacrament. It has the nature of a sacrifice inasmuch as it is offered up; and it has the nature of a sacrament inasmuch as it is received. And therefore it has the effect of a sacrament in the recipient, and the effect of a sacrifice in the offerer, or in them for whom it is offered. . . . For, it has the nature of a sacrifice inasmuch as in this sacrament Christ's Passion is represented, whereby Christ "offered Himself a Victim to God" (Eph. 5:2), and it has the nature of a sacrament inasmuch as invisible grace is bestowed in this sacrament under a visible species. So, then, this sacrament benefits recipients by way both of sacrament and of sacrifice, because it is offered for all who partake of it. For it is said in the Canon of the Mass: "May as many of us as, by participation at this Altar, shall receive the most sacred body and blood of Thy Son, be filled with all heavenly benediction and grace." But to others who do not receive it, it is beneficial by way of sacrifice, inasmuch as it is offered for their salvation. Hence it is said in the Canon of the Mass: "Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants, men and women . . . for whom we offer, or who offer up to Thee, this sacrifice of praise for themselves and for all their own, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their safety and salvation."

There are two things to be considered in the receiving of this sacrament, namely, the sacrament itself, and its fruits. The perfect way, then, of receiving this sacrament is when one takes it so as to partake of its effect. Now, it sometimes happens that a man is hindered from receiving the effect of this sacrament; and such receiving of this sacrament is an imperfect one. Therefore, as the perfect is divided against the imperfect, so sacramental eating, whereby the sacrament only is received without its effect, is divided against spiritual eating, by which one receives the effect of this sacrament, whereby a man is spiritually united with Christ through faith and charity.

In this sacrament, as in the others, that which is a sacrament is a sign of the reality of the sacrament. Now there is a twofold reality of this sacrament, as stated above: one which is signified and contained, namely, Christ Himself; while the other is signified but not contained, namely, Christ's mystical body, which is the fellowship of the saints. Therefore, whoever receives this sacrament, expresses thereby that he is made one with Christ, and incorporated in His members; and this is done by living faith, which no one has who is in mortal sin. And therefore it is manifest that whoever receives this sacrament while in mortal sin, is guilty of lying to this sacrament, and consequently of sacrilege, because he profanes the sacrament: and therefore he sins mortally.