



## TRINITY CHURCH ROCKY HILL

*Bible Study - June 24, 2021 - 6:00PM*

### *Eucharist*

#### **Eucharist**, also called **Holy Communion** or **Lord's Supper**

In Christianity, ritual commemoration of Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples, at which (according to tradition) he gave them bread with the words, *"This is my body,"* and wine with the words, *"This is my blood."* The story of the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus on the night before his Crucifixion is reported in four books of the New Testament (Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:17–20; and I Corinthians 11:23–25). The letters of the Apostle Paul and the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament demonstrate that early Christians believed that this institution included a mandate to continue the celebration as an anticipation in this life of the joys of the banquet that was to come in the Kingdom of God.

The Eucharist has formed a central rite of Christian worship. All Christians would agree that it is a memorial action in which, by eating bread and drinking wine (or, for some Protestants, grape juice or water), the church recalls what Jesus Christ was, said, and did. **They would also agree that participation in the Eucharist enhances and deepens the communion of believers not only with Christ but also with one another.**

Because of variations in both doctrine and practice, however, the Eucharist, which was intended as both a symbol of and a means of fostering unity within the church, has been a source of disunity and even contention. **Many Christian traditions teach that Jesus is present in the Eucharist in some special way, though they disagree about the nature, locus, and time of that presence.** In many other Christian traditions, the Eucharist is symbolic or commemorative. One example of a Christian tradition that does not practice the Eucharist is Quakerism, whose adherents see the ritual as too formal and thus as constraining the experience of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, different denominations disagree on whether access to the Eucharist should be open to all Christians or restricted to members who have fulfilled initiation requirements and thus are in full communion with a particular church. Among Baptists, for example, the practice of "close communion" has restricted the ordinance to those who are baptized properly - i.e., as adults upon a profession of faith. As a result of such variations, the Eucharist has been a central issue in the discussions and deliberations of the ecumenical movement.

According to the eucharistic doctrine of Roman Catholicism, the elements of the consecrated bread and wine are transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ: their substance is converted into the substance of the body and blood, although the outward appearances of the elements, their “accidents,” remain. During the 19th and 20th centuries the Roman Catholic Liturgical Movement put new emphasis on the frequency of communion, the participation of the entire congregation in the priestly service, and the real presence of Christ in the church as the fundamental presupposition for the real presence in the Eucharist.

The eucharistic beliefs and practices of Eastern Orthodoxy have much in common with those of Roman Catholicism. The principal distinctions concern piety and liturgy rather than doctrine. While Roman Catholic theology maintains that the recitation of the words of institution constitutes the Eucharist as a sacrament, Eastern theology has taught that the invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the elements (Greek *epiklēsis*) is part of the essential form of the Eucharist. One other major difference is the Eastern use of leavened rather than unleavened bread for the host, the bread that ceremonially becomes Christ’s body.

Western Protestant denominations vary in their eucharistic practices and attitudes. In some denominations – the Anglican and Lutheran among them - the Eucharist is one of two sacraments (baptism is the other). In other denominations - for example, among Baptists and some Congregationalists - it is an ordinance, an expression of the community’s Christian faith but not a channel of grace. During the Protestant Reformation, Swiss Christian leaders Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin rejected the role of the sacraments in obtaining grace. Both recognized the centrality of the Eucharist to Christian life, yet they broke not only with Roman Catholic teaching but also with fellow reformer Martin Luther, who maintained belief in Christ’s real presence. Zwingli stated that the Eucharist facilitates the appearance of Christ’s spiritual presence to the believer. Calvin, whose position was closer to that of Luther, taught the “real but spiritual presence” of Christ but in the sacramental action rather than in the elements of the Eucharist. The High Church Anglicans (especially since the Anglo-Catholic Oxford movement of the 19th century) and the Lutherans (who affirm the real presence of the body and blood of Christ “in, with, and under” the bread and wine) adhere most closely to the traditions of Catholic eucharistic doctrine and practice. In their liturgies both Anglicanism and Lutheranism work within the framework of the mass, adopting certain elements and rejecting others; the liturgical movements in both traditions during the 19th and 20th centuries restored additional elements, even though theological interpretations of the Lord’s Supper continued to display great variety.