

## THE EUCHARIST.

### A CONFERENCE TO THE SOUTHWARK DEACONS, DUE SATURDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER.

1. It is a great privilege to come back to my own archdiocese of Southwark, where I was ordained, at Our Lady of Grace Charlton, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1967. I owe a great deal in particular to St. Johns Seminary, Wonersh, where I spent eighteen years of my life, six years as a student, then twelve years teaching scripture and revelation theology.
2. It is a great privilege also to come down here from the Maryvale Institute, which is one of the great post-Vatican II success stories of the Catholic Church in this country. It began as the Birmingham Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre in 1980. I was part of its creation as a Higher Education Institute specialising in distance learning, founded in 1990 by Archbishop Maurice Couve de Murville, a priest of Arundel and Brighton Diocese (although when he was ordained he was a priest of Southwark Diocese!).
3. Maryvale now runs three degrees at Bachelor level, Theology, Philosophy, and Catechetics; two degrees at Masters Level, in Theology and in Education, with a third on Marriage being planned; and a Research degree for doctorates. There are three hundred and more students on the various degree courses, from all over these islands and further afield. And there are more than a thousand students on our further education courses such as in Evangelisation, Catechesis, and in Scripture. Links, or what we call "partnerships", are growing whereby we have official contacts with dioceses to help in their catechesis and religious education programmes. I do not feel that I have "left" the Archdiocese of Southwark. Rather, I am a proud member of Staff of a national, indeed international Institute for catechesis, philosophy, theology, and religious education.
4. To give something back this morning, I would like to look at the roots of your devotion to the Eucharist. This devotion is based on perhaps the most important event in the history of the world; when Our Lord Jesus Christ celebrated that first Eucharist, before going to the Mount of Olives, giving his last Discourse to the disciples, before he was arrested,

tried, scourged, crucified, and died for our salvation.

5. This morning, I just want to bring out the meaning of the accounts of the Institution of the Eucharist in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, and then finally in St. John's account in Chapter 6. I have given you the parallels in what we call the Synoptic Gospels and in Corinthians on a separate page. John, as so often, goes his own way. I think that he already knew of the other Gospels, or at least one or two of them. So he did not have to repeat what they said. Rather, he wanted to bring out the meaning of those events he had been present at as the beloved disciple, as he called himself in the Gospel.
6. You will notice that the four accounts are very similar to each other, but there are some differences. According to the critical dating of the Gospels (Mark 64, Matthew and Luke 70), the account in Paul is earliest, 57 A.D. But all four accounts were written down at the latest about 80 A.D.
7. St. Paul's statement is the most significant. He says **For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed** When Paul therefore says that he received the tradition from the Lord, what does he mean? Did he mean that he received a direct revelation of these Eucharistic words on the Damascus Road? Surely not. Much more likely, "the Lord himself was the origin of the tradition in the sense that he was the first link in a chain reaching from him to Paul. Eyewitnesses reported to others what the Lord had said and done, these repeated it to others again, and so in due course the tradition reached Paul, who thus had it *from the Lord* not immediately but by unbroken transmission". (Barrett, 265). This seems to be the most reasonable interpretation.
8. So we have one of the most important examples of tradition. Also of the reliability of the Gospels in handing on that tradition. The Church teaches the historicity of the Gospels in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Paul was receiving a tradition from the historical Jesus, where the words slightly differ, but not substantially. If you look at the bold type in the grid of the Eucharistic Words, you will see what I mean. There are minor additions or subtractions. E.g. I Corinthians and Luke have "Do this in remembrance of me", Matthew and Mark do not. But the essential words, that Jesus broke the bread and said "This is my body", gave out the chalice and said "This is my blood" are in all four accounts. This is precisely what you would expect in a tradition handed on; substantial accuracy, but the odd difference caused by

those words being handed on from 30 A.D. when Jesus was crucified (some time between 26-36, when Pontius Pilate was Roman Governor) until the final written form in the documents we have before us.

9. Yet the general opinion in more radical criticism is that the historical Jesus did not speak these words, but they came "based on the celebration of the Eucharist of the Hellenistic Church" (J.Pelikan, ed., *Twentieth Century Theology in the Making. Volume I, Themes of Biblical Theology*.346). But on what grounds are these vital words denied to the historical Jesus? Because, for Schmidt, sacraments are essentially Hellenistic, "the idea that man can obtain an assurance of God's forgiveness from something which is there for everyone to experience. But Jesus did not point to the objectively perceived occurrence of a visible event in which the forgiveness of God should be clearly manifested: he proclaimed that forgiveness. The decisive factor is his *word.....*" (*ibid*, 9).
10. This is the type of view which I was taught in my Grammar School, back in 1947. That is perhaps why I became interested in what is called the Historical Jesus. I have been working on these questions all my life, and thank God are now producing some fruit in my books. The view of rational criticism is that Jesus of Nazareth was just a simple Rabbi who preached the kingdom of God. He was put to death by a cruel establishment, and his disciples invented the story of the resurrection. He was just a Jewish rabbi, a prophet, whom his followers made into a Gentile God. This view is still very common among biblical scholars. It will take some time before my books are widely accepted! But they will be.
11. My argument in *Bad, Mad, or God?* is that Jesus was not just a rabbi whom Christians made to be the Son of God. Rather, just as the Gospels tell us, Jesus from the beginning of his ministry claimed the authority to forgive sins, to perform miracles by his own power and teach with his own authority. Above all, as John tells us, he told his fellow Jews "Before Abraham was, I Am"/ For this he was condemned to death for blasphemy.
12. If Jesus was then truly God as he claimed to be, then his words at the Last Supper make sense; in fact, they can only make sense if he was God. He was providing his followers with the perfect worship.

13. Schmidt (p.350) held that the original form of the Eucharistic words had only reference to bread, because in the Acts of the Apostles reference is made only to "the breaking of bread", Acts 2:42. But Jeremias discusses this point fully, pp.119-20, and concludes the the phrase "the breaking of bread" refers often to "the rite with which the meal opened..." Jeremias thinks that the phrase "breaking of bread" was therefore appropriate for the Eucharist because "this was not a meal, but rather consisted of the ritual which began the meal, united with that which ended it". (p.121).
14. Jeremias has an important point here. The Words of Institution are not so much a meal as the *making of a covenant*. The word *covenant* (*diathéké*) occurs in all four accounts with respect to the chalice. If anything, it would be easier to argue to the priority of the chalice rather than of the breaking of the bread. If we make a simple comparison between Exodus 24:8 and Luke 22:20, the shortest account of the four accounts of the Words of Institution:-

Exodus 24:8	Luke 22:20
Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, "See the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."	And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood"

15. How do we understand Jesus' unique words? This was one of the scripture verses which convinced me of the Catholic doctrine of the real presence. If the Old Testament blood is only a shadow, then the blood of Christ must be real blood; my flesh is real food, my blood is real drink, as Jesus says in John.
16. The background therefore to the Words of Institution seems quite clear; the making of the covenant between God and the people through God's minister (Moses, Jesus) using in one case the blood of the animal and in the New the real death, the pouring out of the blood of Jesus. The Eucharist may well, as Jeremias claims, have taken place in the context of the celebration of the Passover, cf. Jeremias 41-88. Jesus said, I must eat this Passover with you. Later, in the era of the Pauline church, it no doubt took place in the context of an *agapé*, a Christian love-feast, a common meal. Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:21. (although it seems that Paul wants to severely reduce the meal aspect, cf. Barrett, 1 Corinthians, 263.). But the meal aspect is not central, rather the covenant making.
17. Now let us look at the idea of sacrifice in what Jesus says. Now look at "Do this in remembrance of me"? Did Jesus say this, or did he not?

Concerning the breaking of bread, this phrase is omitted in Matthew and Mark. There is no problem from a Catholic doctrine of divine inspiration of scripture that some phrases attributed to Jesus in the Gospels may in fact be what Vatican II *Dei Verbum* calls an "explication" of the words of Jesus by the evangelist. And it is an explanation which indicates clearly that the Eucharist is a sacrificial meal.

18. In contemporary secular Greek, *anamnesis* could denote remembering someone with reference to a future coming. But concerning the present usage in the Words of Institution, it seems rather that the meaning of *anamnesis* here is more simple and more direct. The Old Testament context is liturgical.

[Num 10:10] Also on your days of rejoicing, at your appointed festivals, and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over your sacrifices of well-being; they shall serve as a reminder (*zikkarón*) on your behalf before the LORD your God: I am the LORD your God.

19. The emphasis here is not so much on a future coming, but a recognition by signs, the blowing of trumpets over the sacrifices, of the presence of their God JHWH. Leviticus is even clearer:-

And you shall put pure frankincense with each row, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion (*azkarah*) to be offered by fire to the LORD. Every sabbath day Aaron shall set it in order before the LORD continually on behalf of the people of Israel as a covenant for ever. [Leviticus 24:7-8]

20. We have here, therefore, a strong sacramental connection with the whole idea of *anamnésis*. The Eucharistic action no doubt reminds us that Jesus will come again at the Parousia. But its principle function is to be a memorial of the covenant *already made* by Jesus with his own flesh and blood, his own redemptive act. The visible signs themselves are the *anamnésis*. It is clear that the historical Jesus would have seen the purpose of his Eucharist this way, whether or not he actually said on the night of the Last Supper "Do this as my memorial". This is because the very words themselves imply the action and so the concept of memorial.
21. This means further that there is a clear connection with the concept of sacrifice. The memorials in the Old Testament are true examples of *sacer facere*, making holy by the use of symbols. Furthermore, the core of the Words of Institution going back to the Jesus himself are themselves quite startling, and relate to that covenant sacrifice. Paul in

his letter to the Corinthians links the celebration of the Eucharist to the concept of sacrifice, in comparing the sacrifice to the gods and the "table of the Lord" :-

22. *Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols; speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. [1 Corinthians 10:14-21].*

23. One of reasons I think why the present Pope has revived permission to celebrate the old rite of the Mass is because some Catholics have used the new rite to be less than reverent. But we do not need to go back to an old rite to realize the holiness of what we are doing when we celebrate the Eucharist. We remember that it is the Lord's own table, his altar of his memorial sacrifice.

24. Finally, Paul's statement that "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup". [1 Corinthians 11:27-28] surely clinches the matter. The one who eats the bread or drinks the cup unworthily is guilty of profanation of the new covenant sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ. "Cup" here refers to the contents of the cup, i.e. the wine which is now his blood.

25. Jesus saw himself as the Suffering Servant. [Isa 53:11] he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities. The Synoptic Gospels all present Jesus as prophesying his coming suffering and death Mark 8<sup>31</sup> Then he began to teach them that the Son of man was destined to suffer grievously, and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; <sup>32</sup> and he said all this quite openly. [//Mark 8:34-9:1, Luke 9:22].

26. Regarding Mark's account, Vincent Taylor comments "The teaching is based upon a unique combination of the idea of the Suffering Servant

of Isaiah 53 with that of the Son of Man".<sup>1</sup> Taylor admits that there are differences in the forms of this prophecy in each of the three Synoptics, and that from the historical point of view "it is probable that Jesus made several attempts to familiarize his disciples with the idea of Messianic suffering....."<sup>2</sup>. But, as Taylor concludes, "in its simplest form the idea is expressed in the opening words...." "The Son of Man must suffer". Taylor also concludes "no good reason can be given why Jesus rather than the later Christian community should not have been the first to give expression to this original conception".<sup>3</sup>

27. To the bare statement that "The Son of Man must suffer....", we would add that Jesus saw it necessary to go up to Jerusalem to die, in order to fulfil his Messianic vocation. C.F.D.Moule, in a fine Chapter on *The Scope of the Death of Christ* in *The Origin of Christology* presents the many views as to Jesus' motivations in going up to Jerusalem. Moule decides against "the attempts of the late Paul Winter and the late Professor S.G.Brandon to make Jesus a would-be revolutionary whose coup failed, or at least a sympathizer with the advocates of violence. This requires a cavalier treatment of the evidence."<sup>4</sup>

28. Rather, Moule concludes:-Instead of any of these interpretations of the death of Jesus, it seems to me that such evidence as we have suggests that Jesus (if we confine ourselves for the moment to the external story, the historian's view) did not seek death; he did not go up to Jerusalem *in order* to die; but he did pursue, with inflexible devotion, a way of truth that inevitably led him to death, and he did not seek to escape. It seems that he went up to Jerusalem on that last, fatal journey, partly to keep the Passover, like any good Palestinian Jew; and partly, like the passionate prophet that he was, to present his nation with one last challenge – to make a final bid to save them from their disastrous course of religious and political blindness. But he knew he was, in fact, bound to die, and he made no attempt either to escape or to defend himself. In that sense, he was the victim of his own loyalty to his vocation.<sup>5</sup>

29. Now we come to consider the account in the Fourth Gospel.

#### **Introductory Questions.**

- a. The Gospel of John was written 90-110 A.D.
- b. It is more of a Jewish than a Greek document. No demonstrable Gnostic influence.

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, *Mark*, 378.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, *Mark*, 377.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>4</sup> Moule, 1977, 108.

<sup>5</sup> Moule, 1977, 109.

- c. It is at least possible that Irenaeus' tradition is correct, that the author was John the Son of Zebedee. But even if the son of Zebedee was not the author, or only the dictator of a scribe writing the Fourth Gospel, the Gospel is of *apostolic origin* in that it is based upon eye-witness tradition. 21:24.
  - d. There is no evidence of a separate redactor. I accept Ruckstuhl's view that there is a unity of style, best explained by unity of authorship. But the author did not necessarily compose the Fourth Gospel all at one session. . As P.Parker<sup>6</sup> has remarked, "It looks as though, if the author of the Fourth Gospel used documentary sources, he wrote them all himself. Thus the possibility arises of additions, e.g. possibly chapter 21.
  - e. There is no evidence of John's literary dependence on the Synoptics. But John probably knew of Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or even all three, and that knowledge influenced his selection of material making up his Gospel.
30. It is important to note that eye-witness is possible regarding every stage of the writing of the Gospel, if the redactor is no-one else but the original author himself or herself! That is what I argue in my new book *Who Was John? The Fourth Gospel Debate After Pope Benedict XVI's Jesus of Nazareth*. Now why does the author of the Fourth Gospel not include a version of the Words of Institution of the Eucharist? Cf. Chapter 13. John does narrate the Last Supper. This is even more convincing evidence that the Last Supper was not in itself Eucharistic. For John, the Passover was the actual death of Jesus. The footwashing was a preparation for his death.
31. John transposes the Words of Institution back into the discourse in Chapter 6. They are detachable from it; just as the Last Supper was not necessarily a Passover meal, even if Jeremias thought so. Two thirds of the Gospel of John, Chapters 7-21, takes place within about six weeks of Jesus' life. Therefore, Chapter 6 is sandwiched between a visit to Jerusalem in Chapter 5, where the man is cured at the Pool of Bethesda; and Jesus' final visit to Jerusalem in Chapter 7, the beginning of the end.
32. Chapter 6 is key for the Fourth Gospel because Jesus declares who he is prior to his final visit to Jerusalem where he openly declares his divine identity "Before Abraham was, I am". [John 8:58], and "I and the Father are One" [John 10:30]. Jesus declares his identity in Chapter 6 by the miracle of the Walking on the Water. The miracle of the walking on the water counts as a primitive theophany. I AM relates to Exodus 3. [John 5:33]. when Jesus says "It is I; do not be afraid." [John 6:20], he is using

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<sup>6</sup> Parker, 1956, 304

the words which YHWH himself uses when announcing his saving presence in a theophany. In the context of his walking on the water, we could interpret "It is I; do not be afraid" as "Don't worry, chaps, it's only me". But in the context of Exodus 3:14-15, where YHWH declares to Moses I AM WHO AM, the Septuagint translating as *egó eimi ho ón* (I am the One who is)<sup>7</sup>, and the person speaking is walking on the water in a choppy sea, then we have the combined elements of one at least like YHWH speaking in a revelation of his power and glory as the master of the elements.

33. I have argued to the veracity of the miracle of the Walking on the Water in *Bad, Mad, or God?* For instance, I find Duncan Derritt's explanation, that Jesus walked on a shelf in the Sea of Galilee thus appeared to be walking on the water, amazingly naive. Would not experienced fishermen have known the shelves, the shallows and the depths, in the sea they were negotiating to catch fish all their lives? If Jesus was to demonstrate himself to be God become Man, then he would have to perform a remarkable miracle such as walking on the water to manifest his divinity.
34. The terrified disciples see Jesus revealing himself as the YHWH of the Old Testament. when Jesus says "It is I; do not be afraid." [John 6:20], he is using the words which YHWH himself uses when announcing his saving presence in a theophany. In the context of his walking on the water, we could interpret "It is I; do not be afraid" as "Don't worry, chaps, it's only me". But in the context of Exodus 3:14-15, where YHWH declares to Moses I AM WHO AM, the Septuagint translating as *egó eimi ho ón* (I am the One who is)<sup>8</sup>, and the person speaking is walking on the water in a choppy sea, then we have the combined elements of one at least like YHWH speaking in a revelation of his power and glory as the master of the elements.
35. "Fear not" was the traditional opening to a theophany or a vision in the Old Testament; because one could not see God's face and live. [Exodus 3:6] Meier outlines an impressive list of God stating who he is, plus the reassurance not to fear, from a key text Isaiah 43:1-13: "Fear not (LXX: *mé phobou.*), for I have redeemed you."

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<sup>7</sup> MJ2, 918

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36. Similarly with the other miracle recounted in Chapter 6, the Miracle of the Loaves. From the nineteenth century, there have been those who have proposed that the people brought their sandwiches, and that the miracle was created from a moral miracle of sharing. But the recounting of this miracle is in all four Gospels. The number of those fed does not go above five thousand. It is absurd to think that the Gospels would have wanted to record so trivial an incident and falsify it as a miracle. As with the walking on the water, this miracle is related to the identity of Jesus as the Word of God. The literary form of the discourse is dialogue with Jesus plus extended homiletic material. Brown first of all is positive about the historicity of the sermon in general:-

*What light do these observations throw on the historical 'value of the discourse? Borgen believes that as it now stands the discourse is 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish Christian construction following the typical homiletic pattern of the day. Borgen includes vs. 51-58 in the discourse, we would have to agree; for, as we shall explain below, we regard 51-58 as a later construction, However, if one studies just 35-50 and makes the allowance that in part(perhaps 36-40,42) it is an amalgamation of sayings that were once independent, is there any a priori reason why the simple outline of the main part of this section could not have come from Jesus? He is presented as speaking in a synagogue in Capernaum (59). Would he not have conformed himself to the ordinary homiletic style for synagogue preachers?*

*Might he not have taken a Scripture citation., as he did in Luke iv 17-19. and made it the text of his sermon? At least, it seems to us that the recognition of the homiletic pattern in this Johannine discourse does not resolve in any negative way the question of historicity and indeed gives a certain plausibility to John's presentation of the scene. <sup>9</sup>*

37. The whole chapter is about the divine claims of Jesus. I AM the bread of Life is first and foremost about Jesus as the Wisdom of God. It does not in itself have Eucharistic meaning. This Eucharistic meaning is contained in 6:51-59, which Brown considers an addition to the meaning of the whole discourse, added later. Brown, I, 287. By the miracle, Jesus verifies his claim to be the Bread of Life; and interprets his actions that way in what we now call the Eucharistic Discourse, John 6:25-59.

38. Cardinal Wiseman, the nineteenth century Archbishop of Westminster, was a Syriac scholar, and wrote an extremely fine book on the Eucharist. He noticed the change of emphasis, what we might say the

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<sup>9</sup> Brown, I, 278.

scandal of the Discourse in Capernaum. From verses 31-47 is about the divinity of Christ. He is the bread of Life, that is the Word of God which comes from the mouth of God. [Deuteronomy 8:3]. As Wisdom, Jesus invites man to her table, Proverbs 9:1 ff. Jesus here then is the fulfilment of Old Testament wisdom personified.

39. But then, in v.50, as we would say in computer language, there is an upgrade. The whole chapter is about the divine claims of Jesus. I AM the bread of Life is first and foremost about Jesus as the Wisdom of God. It does not in itself have Eucharistic meaning. This Eucharistic meaning is contained in 6:51-59, which Brown considers an addition to the meaning of the whole discourse, added later.<sup>10</sup> This would be an addition post-Resurrection according to Brown. This would not necessarily be against the inspiration of the Gospels, since the Holy Spirit would have inspired this addition. Brown says, ".....it seems impossible that the words of 51-58 which refer exclusively to the Eucharist could have been understood by the crowd or even by the disciples".<sup>11</sup> This then would be a back-projection of the Words of Institution in the Synoptics and in Paul.
40. Indeed, there is every evidence that the Words of Institution are embedded in the Discourse 6:51-58. When Jesus says "my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink" 6:55, the word for flesh, *sarx*, is in Hebrew *basar*, which Paul could well have translated *soma*, body. Cf. Brown, I, 285. There is no word in Hebrew for "body" as such. This I think is John's parallel with the Words of Institution.
41. This is possible. Brown is a very fine scholar. His view is not against the faith, since this may be a case of what *Dei Verbum* calls "explication", the evangelist explaining the words of Jesus in a post-resurrection context. However, I respectfully disagree, and think that there are good grounds for thinking that the historical Jesus not only gave this sermon in Capernaum, but included his Eucharistic claims in that sermon as well.
42. The most important point from a literary point of view is that there is no real break in the discourse either in style or in meaning. There is an upgrade, yes, from Jesus as the Bread of Life to Jesus as offering his flesh for food and his blood for drink. But the sense of 30-60 is continuous. It is because Jesus is the Bread of Life that he offers himself

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<sup>10</sup> Brown, I, 287.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, I, 287.

as the food of life. There are no real breaks throughout the Discourse.

43. From the historical point of view, I find it difficult to believe that Jesus left speaking about eating his flesh and drinking his blood until the evening of the Last Supper. They had enough to think about the evening of Jesus' arrest without coming to terms for the first time that he was giving them his flesh to eat and his blood to drink. Brown is quite right in saying that the disciples could not have understood those words before the resurrection. But John in Chapter 6 tells us precisely that. Peter came up to Jesus and did not understand what he was saying. Jesus says, "Are you going away from me as well?" We have a wonderful answer from Peter. "You have the message of eternal life. You are the Holy One of God". Peter is saying, "I do not understand what you are saying. But I have nowhere else to go. You have said it. You are the Son of God. I don't understand it. But I have to accept it because of who you are".
44. How could the disciples after the resurrection have believed that Jesus was the Bread of Life, and even more that they were going to eat his flesh and drink his blood, unless he had said so? This is what is called in historical Jesus scholarship the principle of embarrassment. A saying of Jesus is most likely to be true if it would have embarrassed his disciples. Their transmission of this word is credible as from Jesus, because they would not have included it unless he had said it.
45. The words of Jesus come totally out of the blue. There is no precedent in the Old Testament for the ultimate sacrifice, the *anamnesis*, ending with eating God himself. You could argue that the animals being sacrificed were offered up to God; and in the early more crude interpretation of those sacrifices, the god would eat what had been offered. But the idea of eating God's Son himself, the people participating, must have sounded even worse than Jesus claiming to be God. How could the early Christians believe that even about their Jesus who had risen from the dead, and left them with the true worship, that he had wanted them to eat his flesh and drink his blood?
46. And yet we know from the other accounts we have looked at, at the first three evangelists and in Paul, that that is precisely what was handed on to them from the tradition. That is why I think that Paul had to say what we we have already noted, that "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed...." Paul is saying, that is what has been handed on to me. Otherwise, Paul could not have expected them to believe it. It had to come from Jesus himself.

47. It is quite extraordinary that we have evidence of this Eucharistic faith in its fullness at the beginning of the second century, only just after the death of the apostles, at about 110 A.D. or even earlier. Ignatius, the bishop going to his martyr's death, is worried about groups of heretics called Smyrnians or Philadelphians. Ignatius writes "They obtain from Eucharist and prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ who suffered for our sins, whom the Father raised up by his goodness. Be careful therefore to use one Eucharist-for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup for union with his blood, one altar as there is one bishop with the presbyter and the deacons". We do not need to add to the words of Ignatius, nineteen hundred years ago. He says it all. And he believed it, and died for it, thrown to the lions, because he knew that Jesus had said it, and what the Son of God said must be true, and that what he promised would have to be fulfilled.
48. Thank you for your patience, deacons of the second millennium. May we in our own day be as faithful to the most wonderful doctrine of the Catholic Faith as was Ignatius in his own day, and died for it.