TRANSUBSTANTIATION

The term refers to the change which takes place in the bread and wine of the Eucharist making them the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The term began to appear around the twelfth century and was popularized by Peter Lombard in his *Sentences.* The Fourth Lateran Council used the term in speaking of the Eucharist and the Council of Trent defended the doctrine against attacks by the Reformers.

The Council of Trent was careful to point out that the Scholastic interpretation of the change in the Eucharist was not part of the doctrine. It stated simply that such explanations were appropriate to interpret the kind of change the Church was talking about (Session XIII, chapter 4, DS 877). Unfortunately this distinction is not always clear in popular (and even theological) explanations.

Since the Council of Trent the doctrine of transubstantiation has been the object of bitter polemic between Catholics and other Christians. More recently, thanks to the ecumenical movement, a more irenical spirit has prevailed. The Scholastic interpretation of the doctrine is seen as *one* interpretation of the Church's teaching.

After Vatican II a number of theological efforts to express Church teaching in contemporary language and philosophy (especially existentialist) have been attempted. Such terms as transfinalization, transignification, etc., have been used. In response to these attempts the Holy See has emphasized the *real* (or ontological) change which occurs in the Eucharist through the words of consecration.

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