

Fifteenth Week of Ordinary Time (English)
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost (Latin)
July 12, 2026
Year of the Church in History

“Lex orandi, Lex credendi, Lex vivendi” (Ancient Latin Maxim)

As we proceed to read and reflect upon The First Apology of Saint Justin Martyr, I would like us to keep in our minds the ancient Latin maxim which translates into: ***Lex orandi*** (how we worship), ***Lex credendi*** (what we believe), ***Lex vivendi*** (how we live). In essence, the way we pray and worship shapes what we believe which in turn determines how we choose to conduct our lives. It is my intention, in the following reflections, to repeat this first paragraph so we may have a visible reminder each time we read. Likewise, I will present key statements from Saint Justin, using our Eucharistic Liturgy (Mass) as a benchmark.

“And this food is called among us Eukaristia [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, ‘This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;’ and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, ‘This is My blood;’ and gave it to them alone.”
(Saint Justin, First Apology)

This paragraph offers a great deal for our reflection. Instead of trying to approach many issues with one teaching, let us take our time and go slowly. I am confident this approach will provide a more beneficial reading of the text.

As we recall from last weekend, after the president (bishop, priest) had received the offering of bread, wine, water and the collection, he would offer a prayer of thanksgiving. When this prayer, the Eucharistic Prayer, was concluded, those Christians in attendance would give their assent by saying Amen. Saint Justin now informs us as to what they were agreeing to: the making present of the Eucharist.

Saint Justin writes, this is not common bread and wine, rather it is, through the praying of His words, the body and blood of Jesus. My family, Saint Justin is writing circa A.D.150. He is stating this belief which was taught to the Christians living in Rome. The bread and wine prayed over with His words becomes His Body and His Blood. Going back to earlier writings we have studied, early Christianity believed they were receiving the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Their belief is so fixed that Saint Justin states no one is allowed to receive the Eucharist who has not been baptized and believes what the Christians believe.

The first point we need to remember: Christians believe the Body and Blood of Jesus IS REAL. At no point in history, prior to certain leaders of the Reformation, did Christians ever profess a contrary belief. Remember, both Saint Ignatius of Antioch and Saint Polycarp died professing this belief. Many unnamed Christians will forfeit their lives holding on to this belief. In essence, to be a Christian, meant to believe in the Eucharist as the REAL Body and Blood of Jesus. This first point is just that simple.