



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last week we looked at the Holy, Holy (the acclamation). After this, the presider has his choice of nine Eucharistic Prayers. We'll go through this through Eucharistic Prayer II, but the format is the same, even though some are longer or shorter.

The thanksgiving continues after the acclamation with the words: "You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness." We then move into the *epiclesis* which is the invocation of the Holy Spirit. We invite the Holy Spirit to come down upon the bread and wine and transubstantiate them. At this point, the priest stretches his hands over the offering (I call this the "Superman" hands with the kids): "Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and + Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who connects what we are doing today with the Heart of God – bringing the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary from eternity into time – right here, right now.

We then move into the *Institution Narrative and Consecration*. We recall what Jesus did at the Last Supper, how He gave us His very Body and Blood – to be offered on the Cross the next day – really and truly, under the forms of bread and wine.

Bishop Barron puts it this way:

Again and again, the Gospel writers show us how Jesus' words are efficacious and transformative, producing what they pronounce. ... The night before he died, Jesus performed his most extraordinary word-act. Gathered with the Twelve for a Passover supper, he "took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matt. 26:26-28). If he were an ordinary prophet or teacher, these powerful words, spoken the night before his death, would have burned themselves into the consciousness of his followers and carried enormous symbolic resonance. They might even have changed his disciples profoundly at the spiritual and psychological level. But Jesus was not one prophet among many; he was the incarnate Word of God. Therefore, his words had the power to create, to effect reality at the deepest possible level. Since what he says *is*, the words "This is my body" and "This is my blood" effectively change the bread and wine into his Body and Blood. Like all divine utterances, they *produce* what they say. (pp 104-05 *This Is My Body: A Call to Eucharistic Revival*)

Jesus' words are effective, and they make real what they say. He said, "This is my body" ... and so it was ... so it is. In this moment, Jesus changes the very substance (essence, being) of bread and wine into His Body and Blood. Even though the outward appearances ("accidents") stay the same, what, or, rather, who it is changes forever. Now, it is Jesus here before us.

The Eucharist is the whole of Jesus' Paschal Mystery – His suffering, death, resurrection and ascension all at once. And we get to receive Him!

An image to help: Hiroshi Sujimoto wanted to take a picture of a movie – not a picture of a single moment of a movie, but a single picture of a whole movie. He set up his camera in the theater and this is what he got (*Stanford Theater, Stanford, 1992*): What we see is a gleaming white screen. When we look at the Eucharist, all we see is white, but it is the "whole movie" (as it were).

Jesus' words make real what He says – His Body and Blood are given for us and to us at each Mass. We enter into the Last Supper, especially at the Institution Narrative, and the Lord brings heaven to earth!

