



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

A few years ago, the Pew Research Center did a survey of religions, and in the survey they found that only about 30% of self-identifying Catholics in the U.S. believe that at Mass, the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus. Of those surveyed, one-third of *weekly Mass attendees* don't believe in this substantial change. (In case you are unsure, it has been the constant teaching of the Catholic Church from the very beginning that when Jesus said, "This is my body," He was not speaking of a symbol but that the bread and wine truly became His Body and Blood.)

In reaction to this survey, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) knew that something needed to be done to reinvigorate the faith. They came up with a plan: to have several years dedicated to the Eucharist (they knew that one year would not be enough), and to hold a national Eucharistic Congress. As such, we are now in the middle of the three years of Eucharistic Revival. This

second year is dedicated to parish renewal.

Here at St. Patrick Parish, we are working on several ways to strengthen Eucharistic faith. This week, my Monday night teachings will begin, using FORMED programs to strengthen faith in Jesus and the Eucharist. On Saturday, September 23rd, we will be having a candlelight Eucharistic Procession ("Christ Be Our Light") in order to pray for those who have fallen away from the practice of the Faith (keep an eye out for further "Encounter Nights" in the area to help people encounter Christ in the Eucharist). We are also putting a stronger emphasis on activities we already have in place in the parish – Sunday and daily Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, the Light of the World Retreats. And I am committing myself to writing a series of bulletin articles teaching about the Eucharist and the Mass – this being the first one.

The Second Vatican Council said that the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" (*Lumen Gentium* 11, qtd. in Catechism of the Catholic Church 1324). This is a reminder to us that the Eucharist is everything: that from which our life flows (the source), and that toward which our life is directed (the summit). How can that be? Because the Eucharist is JESUS, not a what, but a *who*!

Over the course of the next several articles, I'll examine (hopefully in an understandable way) how the Eucharist as Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion. In the midst of this, I'll break down the different parts of the Mass and explain what it means and why we do what we do, as well as giving practical tip for getting more out of Mass.

Does that seem like a daunting task? It does to me, but as I write this, I am committing myself to put in the time and effort to do this well.

In the meantime, I have homework for you. I encourage you to go onto YouTube and watch two videos about the importance of the Eucharist. The first is about what mystically is happening at Mass. You can find it by searching "**The Veil Removed**" (or going here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOLZDaTgIaM). The second is about what happens at Eucharistic Adoration. This video is done by Fr. Mike Schmitz (of "Bible in a Year" and "Catechism in a Year" fame). You can find it by searching "**What Really Happens in Eucharistic Adoration**" (or by going here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6hXG43Fflw). Watching both videos will only take about 15 minutes out of your life, but may very well change how experience the graces God pours out in the Eucharist.

I have such hopes for these years of Eucharistic Revival, that they will bring about a renewal of faith and greater Eucharistic amazement (to quote St. John Paul II). I encourage you to enter in to these mysteries, asking God to give you a greater faith and openness to the grace He pours out in the Eucharist.