



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In this parish focused year of the national Eucharistic Revival, I have committed myself to writing a series on the Eucharist. I said that I would look at the Eucharist as Presence, Sacrifice and Communion, examining and explaining parts of the Mass as part of all of this. Today, I'll begin with the Eucharist as Presence.

The Second Vatican Council said that Christ was present in the Mass in four different ways: 1) in the proclamation of the Word of God (the Sacred Scriptures); 2) in the person of the minister (the priest acting *in persona Christi capitis* – in the person of Christ the head); 3) in the assembly (everyone at Mass... including the angels and saints – “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” [Matthew 18:20]); 4) and in the Eucharist (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7).

The Church says that the Eucharist is the presence of Christ *par excellence* – in some way the highest, best presence of Christ, for the Eucharist is Jesus Christ Himself, in sacramental form.

The Church's theological language says that in the Eucharistic prayer at the Mass, the bread and wine are *transubstantiated* into the true Body and Blood of Jesus our God. This means that the very essence of what and who Jesus is, is present in the Eucharist: no longer bread or wine. His whole self, resurrected in glory, is there – His whole humanity and His divinity. At the Last Supper, Jesus revealed to His apostles how He was to remain present to them even after His ascension into heaven – that He would be present in the Eucharist. And so, when we come into the presence of Christ in the Eucharist (either in the Tabernacle, in the Monstrance at Adoration, or as part of the Mass) it is Jesus our God really there. God, who humbled Himself to become man, humbles Himself even more by becoming the Eucharist. As one author puts it:

The Eucharist takes the divine condescension that culminates in the Incarnation [God becoming flesh] one step further. The love that leads the Word to take on flesh is what leads Him to wish to remain with us forever during our earthly pilgrimage, present with us wherever there is a priest and tabernacle. He completely veils His majesty, hiding behind the appearances of bread and wine, so that we may not be afraid to approach Him, whenever we wish. (*The Eucharist: Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice and Communion* by Lawrence Feingold, p. 13)

When we come into the presence of Christ, we are changed. Just as we get a suntan when we sit out in the sun (unless you're like me and you burn), so we get Son-tanned by sitting in the presence of the Son. He changes us into Him. It's like when we spend time with friends, we begin to be like them – we share the same “lingo,” we take an interest in the other's interests. If our friends are virtuous, we are challenged to grow in virtue; if they are full of vice, we often take on their vices. So too with Jesus: as we spend time with Him, we become more like Him.

Jesus allows us to come to Him any time we need, to pour out our hearts, to receive the strength for the battle of life, to give praise and thanks for His gifts, to enter into a deeper intimacy. He signals to us by His humble silent presence, that He will always be there waiting for us (like the merciful father to the prodigal son). He is there, in the Tabernacle, in the Monstrance, on the Altar at Mass, waiting for you, for me, to come and entrust our hearts to Him, waiting for us to tell Him about our days, our struggles, our joys.

I invite you to take some time to ponder the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and consider spending some quality time with Him.