



*From the Pastor
23^d Sunday
in Ordinary Time - C
September 4, 2022*

EUCHARIST IS THE REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST. In part 5 of my series on the **US Catholic Bishops'** document, **The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church,**

which will guide their 3-year **National Eucharistic Revival** which began last June, I reflect on one of three essential truths about the **Eucharist**: it is the **Real Presence of Christ**. Last week I addressed the **Sacrifice of Christ** and in two weeks I'll reflect on **Communion with Christ and the Church**. To read past articles on this **Revival**, the whole document, or the free study guide, go to our Parish website: **easeton.net** and click on **National Eucharistic Revival Bulletin Articles**.

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him." [John 6:54-56]

Here's a quote from the Bishops' document:

"... the Church has [always] believed and celebrated according to the [above] teaching of Jesus ... It is not "ordinary bread and ordinary drink" that we receive in the Eucharist, but the flesh and blood of Christ, who came to nourish and transform us, to restore our relationship to God and to one another."

THE BREAD OF LIFE. To understand why the **Church** so firmly teaches that the **Eucharist truly is** the **Real Presence of Jesus Christ, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity**, it would help if you read the **6th Chapter of Saint John's Gospel: the Bread of Life Discourse**. It should sound very familiar, for back in 1966, Sr. Suzanne Toolan, RSM, enshrined that chapter in a beloved hymn we still sing: **"I Am the Bread of Life."** As it unfolds, it becomes clear that **Christ's** teaching about his own **Real Presence** in what became the **Eucharist shocked** many - and even **drove** some away! **Jesus** even asked His **Apostles** if they also wanted to leave!

That is why the **Catholic Church INSISTS** that the **Eucharist is Christ's Real Presence!** For after **Jesus** proclaimed that the **Consecrated Bread and Wine** truly become His own **Flesh and Blood**, He added a modern-age adage: **"It's MY way or the highway!"** And as He let non-believers walk away

and not partake in the **Eucharist**, so, too, does **Holy Mother Church**. She **does not** and **cannot** offer a blanket invite to all to join in the **Eucharistic Banquet**. Those who wish to receive **MUST** first accept that it truly **IS Christ's Real Presence**, not simply a **symbol** or **remembrance** of Him!

WE NEED EYES OF FAITH! To the human eye, the **Eucharistic Elements** still look and taste like bread and wine, even after they are consecrated, the highest form of a blessing. [Admittedly, for practical reasons and to minimize crumbs, we use thin wafers that are more akin to cardboard!] But with the eyes of faith, we can 'see' how, after the **Ordained Bishop or Priest** 'brings down' the **Holy Spirit** upon the offerings with his consecrated hands and says the words our **Lord** said at the **Last Supper**, **Jesus** fulfills His promise **"to be with us always"** [Cf. **Matthew 28:20**] in a most ordinary yet most profound and amazing way! This is, perhaps, the greatest of all the mysteries of our **Faith**, one that even **Saints** struggled with - yet they put their trust in what **Jesus** said is, indeed, true: **"This is my Body; this is my Blood!"**

BE TRULY PRESENT TO THE REAL PRESENCE. At the 1960's **Second Vatican Council**, **Saint Paul VI** wrote, **"This presence is called 'real' not to exclude the idea that the others are 'real' too, but rather to indicate presence par excellence, because it is substantial and through it Christ becomes present whole and entire, God and man."** Because of this, the **Church** prescribes rites and actions to reaffirm and bolster our faith in the **Real Presence**. Among them are the forms of worship of the **Blessed Sacrament** outside of **holy Mass**: **Eucharistic Exposition, Adoration, Benediction; Eucharistic Processions; and Forty Hours Devotions**. We are directed to reverently **genuflect** before the **Blessed Sacrament** reserved in the **Tabernacle**, **refraining** from **all food and drink** [except water and medicine] for one hour before, and **bowing one's head** just before receiving **Holy Communion**. We must confess all **mortal** sins before receiving **Holy Communion**, or if no **Priest** is available, to make a good **Act of Contrition** and get to **Confession** ASAP. And we must never stop learning about the **Eucharist** or miss a weekly dose of this grace-filled Gift!

In His holy Name,

Rev. Thomas J. Serafin, KCHS