



The Real Presence of Christ

Absence makes the heart grow fonder - sometimes! Coming out of the pandemic, most Catholics were eager to come back to Masses in the Church. People are either tired of watching Mass online, want to connect with friends in the parish, miss the ministries they serve or just want to go back to “normal”. Hopefully above all of these and other reasons is our desire to encounter Jesus at Mass and particularly His Real Presence in the Eucharist.

What is the Real Presence of Christ? The Church professes that in ‘the most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist “the Body and Blood, together with the Soul and Divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ*, is truly, really, and substantially contained.”’ (CCC 1374) In the person of Christ, priests ‘preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and the wine so that they become the Body and Blood of the Lord.’ (CCC 1411) As Jesus Himself said: “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. ” (Jn 6:54-56).

Can we fully grasp this teaching? This doctrine is one of the central mysteries of the Catholic faith surpassing human understanding. By mystery it does not mean we cannot know anything about it, but it is a truth that on our own we cannot know everything about. Out of love, God reveals truth to us through the gift of faith and the grace of the Holy Spirit. It is only through the eyes of faith that we can perceive this unique presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

After consecration, the priest prays the anamnesis (calling to mind - “*Do this in memory of Me*”) to make present the Paschal mystery by which Christ accomplished His saving work. In the liturgy, we are not just spectators but active participants, present at the table of the Lord and at the foot of His cross with our Blessed Mother mystically connected to the divine eternity. The Eucharist cures and protects us from amnesia (opposite of *anamnesis*), against forgetting that the Lord is with us. He calls and sends us to be His real presence to the world.

In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Christ comforts us, empowers us, forgives us and profoundly connects us all through our union with Him. Reconstructing the saying above, a transformed knowledge of and assent to Christ’s Real Presence make the heart grow fonder of the Lord.

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