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CATHOLIC HERALD

THE EUCHARIST

Special Section



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The Eucharist is 4REAL



Without hesitation, I can tell you that the greatest moment of my life was my First Holy Communion. Yes, even greater than ordinations and graduations.

Over the years, I've realized with greater intensity that day was the moment I received the Body and Blood of Jesus into my life. This was the food that would empower me to live fully my baptismal promise and assume my place among the faithful of his Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1324) states: "The Eucharist is 'the source and the summit of the Christian life.'" The other sacraments, and indeed all work of the Church, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it.

It seems, however, that many Catholics question the great miracle of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. They ask the question "How can it be REAL?"

The Eucharist is "Four Rs" — REAL in four ways — for each of us: real presence, real sacrifice, real food and a real relationship. (See further explanation on Page 4.)

My friends, as you discern listening to what God desires for your life, remember Christ must always be at the center of your discernment. It is the Eucharist that gives strength to your search. At the center of the Church is the person of Jesus Christ. In the Church, you seek to serve, defend and promote him at this time in our history. I hope that you realize that you seek to serve because you care about your salvation and the salvation of our brothers and sisters.

I hope and pray the "Four Rs" of his real presence, real sacrifice, real food and real relationship, we are privileged to experience in the Eucharist may fill you and your friends and families with his love so that you Love One Another.

+Jerome E. ListECKi

Most Reverend Jerome E. ListECKi
Archbishop of Milwaukee

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BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US. - 1 JOHN 4:19

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Real Presence

One of the most cherished mysteries of our Catholic teaching is the Real Presence in the Eucharist. It is more than a sign or symbol – it is the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. The bread and wine consecrated through the action of the priest at the Mass becomes the Body and Blood of our Lord.

I have heard some claim, how can this be? If we understand the power of God – who can create “ex nihilo,” or from nothing – then we understand that God can easily choose whatever manner he deems necessary for the sake of our spiritual well-being. His Real Presence fulfills in a unique way the truth of his statement that I am with you always until the end of the world.



Real Food

The Eucharist is real food. We need nourishment to survive. Jesus gives us his very self as food for the journey through life. “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 6:55-56)

The interesting aspect about this food and drink is that, when we consume it, it does not become us, but instead we become what we consume. We become Jesus to proclaim Christ to our brothers and sisters in the world. We can feed a starving world, for his food offers life to all who believe.



Real Sacrifice

The Eucharist is real sacrifice. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states (1323): “At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection, a sacrament of love.”

The cross of Jesus was given to us for our salvation. It is a constant reminder of the unconditional love that God has for us. He died for us. This sacrifice is repeated at the altar, and we are called to accept the cross of Jesus Christ, to go into the world proclaiming the presence of Jesus Christ received in the Eucharist.



Real Relationship

The Eucharist is a real relationship. Through the Eucharist, we are called into the family. We are the Body of Christ, and as the body, we have a relationship through Christ with our brothers and sisters.

Pope Benedict XVI in “Sacramentum Caritatis” (“The Sacrament of Charity”) stated, “Communion always and inseparably has both a vertical and a horizontal sense: it is communion with God and communion with our brothers and sisters.”

We come to understand that our reception of the Eucharist calls us to assume responsibility for the brothers and sisters of not only our Church, but for the world.

How Do We Know?

FR. BRAD KRAWCZYK
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

Amongst the greatest acts of the incarnate Lord was his giving himself to his disciples in the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday night at the Last Supper.

The gift of the Eucharist given to us by Christ himself is a sacramental reality indicating the reconciliation gained for us with the Father by Jesus' saving Death and Resurrection. Our blessed Lord left us with a memorial of his presence, and in such a way that he instructs his follows to do what he did at the Last Supper in remembrance of him.

He calls us not to remember him like one remembers a long-distant relative who is now dead but in a manner that he instituted so that he may remain truly present until he comes again. As the priest at Mass speaks the very words of Christ himself, namely, "This is my body" and "this is my blood," our gifts of bread and wine become his sacramental flesh and blood as our food along the pilgrim way to heaven, strengthening us to grow in love of God and neighbor, and be in communion.

In Chapter 6 of John's Gospel, Jesus refers to himself as "the bread of life." Not every person who was listening understood what he meant or believed him, so he repeated that he is, "the bread which had come down from heaven."

He went on to teach that unless you eat of his flesh and drink of his blood, you will not have life within you.

To accept the sacramental gift of Jesus' Real Presence in the most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, we are asked to look beyond the bread and wine and see the unseen reality with eyes of faith.

Ave verum corpus.

Hail true body.

Eucharist is the Real Presence



Why Does it Matter?

FR. BRAD KRAWCZYK
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

Why does believing in the Real Presence of Christ in the most Blessed Sacrament matter? For us Catholics, the answer to this question is significant.

The difference is all about God's love for us. The most Holy Eucharist tells us something about God's love. One of the chief characteristics of those who are in love with each other is their desire to spend all of their time with each other, often just simply to be in each other's presence.

In many ways, this is how the Blessed Sacrament works. Jesus' proximity to us speaks of his care and concern for us. Recall that God created each one of us and longs for us to be in union with him. The Eucharist makes this possible in ways that are beyond our understanding. The worthy reception of Holy Communion fills us with sanctifying grace, which is the divine life.

This grace helps us to love in accord with God's will for our lives and do so in a manner that is holy.

Christ on the altar, Christ in Holy Communion, Christ in the tabernacle, Christ in the monstrance is available to us so that we might know how much God loves us, cares for us and feeds us. Holy Communion for Catholics is the sacrament of unity.

God feeds us with the bread of angels that we might come to be like him and live forever with him in heaven.

In John's Gospel, we are reminded by Jesus himself that whomever eats his flesh and drinks his blood abides in him and he in them. When we receive the Blessed Sacrament worthily, love fills us up.

Let us take on the attitude of St. Peter. When our blessed Lord asked him what he thought about his teaching on the Eucharist, Peter confessed his faith in Jesus' words, responding, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Fr. Brad Krawczyk is the Director of Worship and Liturgical Formation at Saint Francis de Sales Seminary, St. Francis.



Fed by the Eucharist

MERRIDITH FREDIANI
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

In the beginning, God was important and a priority, but I hadn't yet truly met him. I was hungry but I didn't know it. I was unsettled and searching, looking forward instead of being present. There was an emptiness I couldn't identify. I didn't know what I was hungry for.

I don't have a defining moment of conversion — more an evolution. I believe my love for the Eucharist and the Mass was initiated by the Litany of Humility. After sincerely saying that prayer, the Lord allowed me to taste true humility. I didn't know that he was inviting me into a deeper love for Jesus in the Eucharist and the sacrifice of the Holy Mass. He was inviting me to the banquet.

God knows what we need better than we do, and Jesus is a gentle teacher. In praying the Litany of Humility, I gave God permission to act more fully in my life. When an unexpected change occurred, I was left with a hole and no idea how to fill it. It took a year

for the first step and, while waiting, I ran to Jesus.

The Brew City Catholic missionaries serve college students. That year, they also served me. I began attending Mass and adoration several times a week. It became a routine that helped me keep my sanity in a time when my future seemed to hold only a giant question mark. Slowly, I began to realize what I was hungry for.

Every time I walked into the building, I heard my name shouted with joy. Through their love and hours spent with Jesus, I began to trust that God really does love me and desire goodness for me. I found comfort in that small chapel with the 1970s vibe, where Jesus started to feed me. It was the beginning of a journey.

As I grew in faith and made God more central, he surrounded me with people who taught me how to love others and Jesus better. In attending Mass and sitting in front of the Blessed Sacrament in adoration, I got to know Jesus and

“ It is Jesus Christ who humbled himself to become one of us and who died a horrible death so that we may be with him in eternity. ”

learned to trust his goodness. I learned there's a lot that I thought I needed that I don't actually need. He is enough.

As I encountered Jesus more, I became happier and peaceful. I knew it was God's grace and the Holy Spirit softening my heart. The feeling of emptiness and hunger went away. I began to feel whole.

Then the pandemic came, and we could no longer go to Mass or adoration. I couldn't go to the banquet any longer.

My edges became jagged. I was unsettled, a bit bitter and not peaceful. I realized what was missing was the Eucharist. I was grateful for the televised Mass, but it wasn't enough. It was hard missing the Triduum services, and not being able to fully enter into Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection. I missed being able to be with Jesus in the Eucharist and receive him in Holy Communion. I didn't like who I was becoming. Thankfully, God gave me the grace to recognize it was him I missed and him I needed. I don't just desire him — I need him. I know that now. I need Jesus in the Eucharist. I need to receive him. I need to pray in adoration. I cannot do this without him. Any good in me is because of him.

I won't forget my first Mass back after lockdown. I no longer take Mass for granted. The Eucharist is a gift. It's not a mere symbol — it is Jesus Christ who humbled himself to become one of us and who died a horrible death so that we may be with him in eternity. It is the same Jesus who comes to us in every Mass. He is in every monstrance and every tabernacle. He teaches us to love him and others, and also how to be loved.

From my time with him, I found my group, my friends in Christ and my place as God's daughter. The blessing of his presence and the ability to be with him and receive him can never be underestimated or taken for granted. He is calling. He is there.

He makes us whole and feeds us.

Merridith Frediani is a Catholic Herald contributor and the author of "Draw Close to Jesus: A Women's Guide to Eucharistic Adoration."



What: Archdiocese Pilgrimage to National Eucharistic Congress

When: July 17-21, 2024

Where: The Archdiocese of Milwaukee pilgrims will be bused to Indianapolis together, stay in the Marriot Indianapolis East and enjoy seating together at large events of the congress to be held at Lucas Oil Stadium.

Leaders: Bishop Jeffrey Haines; Bishop James Schuerman; Fr. Juan Manuel Camacho, archdiocese

Vicar of Hispanic Ministry and pastor of the four Racine parishes of St. Patrick, St. Richard, St. Edward and Sacred Heart; Fr. Phillip Bogacki, an archdiocese Vicar General who is pastor of Christ King and St. Bernard parishes in Wauwatosa; and Fr. Dan Janasik, pastor of St. Leonard Parish, Muskego.

For more information on costs, registration and other details: www.archmil.org/AOM-congress

Deadline: Register by Dec. 1 to reserve your space.

Registration Closes Soon for Pilgrimage to National Eucharistic Congress

If you've ever been to a huge concert or professional football game, you understand the power of being with tens of thousands of like-minded people.

Now imagine it's Jesus at center stage, and it's 80,000-plus Catholics who are One Body of Christ in a new way — not just fans, but renewed followers on fire to go out and share his mercy and goodness.

This is the “why” of the National Eucharistic Congress to be held next July.

“God is up to something, and I can't wait to see what it is,” said Margaret Rhody, Associate Director for Parish Renewal with the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Office of Evangelization and Catechesis. “This will be a transformative journey that you will share with tens of thousands of fellow Catholics.”

Catholics from all over the United States will gather

July 17-21 in Indianapolis at Lucas Oil Stadium and ask Jesus to revive their hearts, the Church and the world. They will be sent home to share their experiences in a new chapter of missionary faith.

The congress is part of a three-year National Eucharistic Revival initiated by the bishops of the United States. The revival's mission is to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

The first National Eucharistic Congress in 83 years will include prayerful opportunities such as open-air Masses and Eucharistic processions, as well as inspiring speakers who make up a “who's who” of well-known Catholics, other formation and discussions.

“This will be a turning point in faith for thousands of people. Do you want it to be yours?” Rhody said.

Heart Speaks to Heart

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.” — Isaiah 55:8

FR. JOHN LOCOCO
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

You can barely see what is happening. A billowing cloud of incense, tendrils curling steadily from a bronze censer, envelops the air in the cramped chapel of the Newman Center on the campus of University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. As the priest elevates the monstrance containing our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, a random scattering of the faithful bow and cross themselves in humble devotion. Incense obscures visions and distorts senses as this small gathering of people who worship in adoration.

Cor Jesu, like so many other nights, was initiated more than 10 years ago. In 2012, a couple of priests decided to make a commitment: every Wednesday — without fail — there would be a dinner, an hour of adoration and confession, and an evening Mass at 8 p.m. It would be known as *Cor Jesu*. And without fail, for more than a decade, this promise has been faithfully carried out.

In its earliest days, the response was quite underwhelming. One week there would be 10 people, then six, then maybe 12. But slowly, ever so slowly, it began to blossom and grow. Occasional attendees became regular devotees; friends began to invite friends, and this small gathering on the fertile mission

territory of the East Side of Milwaukee continued to grow.

Eventually, the group outgrew the chapel of the Newman Center and moved a mile away to one of the largest churches in the area, St. Robert Parish in Shorewood. There, *Cor Jesu* slowly plodded along, with neither a care nor concern for becoming anything more than an offering, an oblation if you will, to the people of the archdiocese, desperately hungering for the Lord.

It should not have worked. But then again, his “thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,” says the Lord. (Isaiah 55:8) Nobody is given a stipend; nothing is really scheduled. What began as a musician offering to play his guitar for adoration has grown into polyphonic chant from a schola of 15, organized by local musicians who practice on their own time. What began as one or two priests hearing confession has become as many as eight priests at a time, driving in from their own parishes, just to hear

confessions and participate in Mass. What began as two or three at the discernment dinner has become as many as 30 who regularly come together to share in food and fellowship. It should not have worked, and yet, it is in so many ways the dynamic heart of renewal in our archdiocese.

You can barely see what is happening.

But we know why it is happening. It is because of him and him alone.

From the first hot and humid days in the stuffy chapel to the glorious celebrations today at the parish, the community around *Cor Jesu* has unwaveringly been devoted to adoring our Lord in the Blessed

Sacrament. When everything else is obscured in this passing age, it is the look of the one who loves us that continues to provide strength and firm resolve. Why do we keep coming? Perhaps we are like the farmer who simply responded to the *Curé d’Ars* when asked why he so often frequented the chapel, “I look at him and he looks at me.”

I heard
I could find
Jesus here.

You can barely see what is happening.

But he sees what is happening to us. He sees our devotion, our piety, our patient determination as week after week, we come before him in adoration. Before our Lord in the Eucharist, we can make of our lives an oblation, pouring out to him every wound, weakness and worry.

Cor Jesu is nothing more than the heart of Jesus poured out for us. Like light in the darkness and the salt of the earth, he is the illumination and flavor that is so desperately needed in an existence that is increasingly dark, bland and without verve. The first priests of *Cor Jesu* have moved on, replaced by others. The first of the faithful who darkened the doorsteps of the chapel have since gotten married, been ordained or professed vows to our Lord in religious consecration. We will never know all of its fruit this side of heaven. But we do know this: it has been a place of renewal.

When asked why she decided to move to Milwaukee, one young woman said, “Because I heard I could find Jesus here.”

You can barely see what is happening.

But sometimes, you can.

Fr. John LoCoco is the Vocation Director for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Eucharist as Real Sacrifice

KIM MANDELKOW
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

How often do we use the word “sacrifice” to mean something we “offer up” or “do” to benefit either ourselves or someone else? The very word “sacrifice” often has connotations of self-deprivation, inconvenience, endurance, or even suffering. Some examples of sacrifices are when parents give up sleep to care for a sick child, or spouses who mutually cooperate to build a life together. Everyone makes financial sacrifices to ensure a more secure life in the future. During Lent, we sacrifice food in order to share it with those who would otherwise go hungry. Sometimes someone sacrifices a kidney so their loved one can live. The word sacrifice conveys many meanings; however, at the root of each of these examples is love.

The Eucharist is a Real Sacrifice. At Mass, the priest says the words of Jesus at the Last Supper over the gifts of bread and wine: “This is my Body, which will be given up for you,” and “This is the chalice of my Blood, which will be poured out ...” These words point forward to the death that Jesus would die for us on the cross, making the Last Supper a sacrificial meal.

The sacrifice of the Mass is not a reenactment, imitation or a dramatization of the Last Supper; rather, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says it, “makes present the one sacrifice of Christ.” Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ “entered once and for all into the sanctuary ... with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.” (Hebrews 9:12) The historical sacrifice of Christ on the cross is not repeated, but instead, the sacrifice of the Mass is a memorial in which Christ’s sacrifice is sacramentally present.

We call this *anamnesis*, a word which is from the same root as the word “amnesia.” While amnesia is to forget, *anamnesis* means “to remember.” We don’t remember, however, in the sense of thinking about an event from the past. Rather, the remembering we do at Mass is our incorporation into the Death and Resurrection of Christ while looking forward to his glorious return on the Last Day. In other words, at Mass, we become mysteriously present to the entire Paschal Mystery. While Jesus does not die again and again on the cross, we participate in his dying and rising each time we go to Mass.

Through the ritual action of the liturgy and the narrative spoken over the gifts



of bread and wine, the Church makes an *anamnesis* of what the Father accomplished, once and for all, for our salvation. Through *anamnesis*, we as worshipers are enabled to experience in our lives this ultimate gift of the Father’s love for us, his holy people.

The Eucharist as Real Sacrifice, however, has another dimension. The privilege of participating in the Eucharist is that we take part in what we enact. God’s love for us, manifest in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, begs a response from us: love in response to love; sacrifice in response to sacrifice. When we participate in Mass, we offer God our thoughts, prayers, words, deeds, trust, service and charity — our very lives and everything that we are — and we pray that we may be transformed and so be gathered into one in the unity of the Body of Christ. As St. Paul says in his letter to the Romans, “By the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1) Eucharistic Prayer IV explicitly asks that God’s people “may truly become a living sacrifice in Christ.” At every Mass, we place ourselves on the altar together with the bread and the wine. Once they become the Body and Blood of Christ, we offer them to the Father, together with our lives.

And here’s the point so many of us miss at Mass — there’s a direct link between the sacrifice we offer and the Communion we receive. When the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, and are returned to us for nourishment in the reception of Holy Communion, they also represent the offering we placed on the altar. So when we receive Holy Communion, we receive the presence of Christ, but we also receive a sharing in the fruits of our sacrifice.

The Eucharist is a Real Sacrifice — it is the *anamnesis* of Christ’s once-for-all, loving sacrifice for us. It is also our sacrifice — the loving surrender of our wills and our lives to God. When we receive Holy Communion, we are strengthened by Christ’s Real Presence so that we can do the Father’s will. The Mass, which perpetuates the unbloody sacrifice of Christ, strengthens us to live the sacrifices which the Christian life demands.

Kim Mandelkow is the past Director of the Office for Worship for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, now pursuing a doctorate in liturgical studies in Rome.

Bethlehem: ‘The House of Bread’

BISHOP JAMES T. SCHUERMAN

We are in the midst of the Eucharistic Revival. Participation in this revival is all about restoring understanding of the great mystery of the Eucharist and renewing our faith through the worship of Christ in the Eucharist.

The celebration of the Eucharist, the source and summit of our faith, provides us the opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ and his transforming love. This time of the Eucharistic Revival is an occasion for all of us to enrich our understanding of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist through exploring the truth of this teaching, through experiences of the beauty of worship and through self-giving acts, especially service to those in need. It is a time to explore, in a profound way, the mysteries of our faith.

The Advent season provides us another opportunity to enrich our faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. During this season, we prepare ourselves for the celebration of the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. “Bethlehem” is a Hebrew word that literally means “House of Bread.” Jesus, who later in life was to proclaim himself the “Bread of Life,” was born in the humble city called the “House of Bread.”

Advent is a word that comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming,” and, of course, refers to the coming of Christ. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in a well-known sermon, spoke of three comings of Christ. The first coming of the Christ refers to the mystery of his Incarnation, when he came into this world and became one like us. He made his

dwelling among humanity and was seen by the people of his time. The second coming of Christ refers to his future, final coming, when all people will see the salvation of God. The third, intermediate coming lies between the first coming and the second coming, invisible to the naked eye, understood only through the eyes of faith. (*Sermo 5, In Adventu Domini*, 1-3.)

St. Bernard writes, “In his first coming, our Lord came in our flesh and weakness; in this middle coming, he comes in spirit and in power; in the final coming, he will be seen in glory and majesty.”

We live in the time of Christ’s intermediate Advent, and Christ comes into our lives in many ways — through prayer, through the proclamation of the word of God, through our interaction with other people and in a very special way, through the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Eucharist. We are made one with Christ when he comes to us, body, blood, soul and divinity, in the Eucharist. St. Bernard writes, “Feed on goodness, and your soul will delight in its richness. Remember to eat your bread, or your heart will wither away. Fill your soul with richness and strength.”

The Advent season gives us the opportunity to reflect upon Jesus, the bread come down from heaven, who was born in the House of Bread. During the time of his ministry of preaching, teaching and healing, Jesus told the crowds, who had followed him to Capernaum, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.” (John 6:35) Jesus added, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I give is my flesh for the life of the world.” (John 6:51)

This same Jesus gathered his disciples together in a room in Jerusalem the night before he died on the cross. Mark’s Gospel gives this account of the Lord’s Supper: “While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them and said, ‘Take it; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’” (Mark 14:22-25)

Scripture tells us that Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger, the feeding place for beasts of burden. It is a very powerful image for all of us who struggle with our burdens in life. In the Eucharist, we encounter Jesus, alive, risen and in our midst. In the Eucharist, we encounter nourishment, refreshment, peace and communion with God and our brothers and sisters.

In the Advent season, we contemplate God’s greatest gift to us — his Son Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, born in Bethlehem, the House of Bread. May Jesus, the Bread of Life, nourish us, guide us and keep us safe from harm, until he comes again in glory.

Bishop James T. Schuerman has been an Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee since 2017.





Scriptural Origins: ‘Bread from Heaven’

FR. JOHN MITCHELL
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

“I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” (Luke 22:15)

In these words, our Lord invites us, as he invited his apostles at the hour of the Last Supper, to enter with him into the Paschal (“Passover”) Mystery of his Passion, Death and Resurrection. We share this communion with him in and through the mystery of the Eucharist.

Jesus’ Passover is deeply connected to the Old Testament Passover that commemorated the people of Israel’s exodus from Egypt. As Brant Pitre helpfully lays out in his book,

“ I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. — John 6:51 ”

“Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist,” Jesus travels from Bethany to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem, as was the custom. (Mark 14:13) He celebrates it at the customary evening time of day (Deuteronomy 16:6), and with the customary cups of ceremonial wine. (Mishnah, Pesachim, 10:1-7; Luke 22:14-20; Matthew 26:27-30.39; John 19:23-30) As he breaks the bread, he explains its meaning, just as the father of the house would normally do with the unleavened bread of the Passover meal. (Exodus 12:26-27; Mishnah, Pesachim 10:5) And he and the Apostles conclude with a hymn, which would have been Psalm 118, the “Great Hallel” psalm sung at the end of the Passover meal. (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26)

And yet, the Last Supper is also markedly different

from a normal Passover meal. For example, Jesus does not celebrate it with his family, as was the custom. And rather than recalling the covenant of Abraham, followed by the story of the Exodus, Jesus instead speaks of the “new covenant,” prophesied by Jeremiah (31:31), which he proclaims to be inaugurated in their midst. (1 Corinthians 11:25)

Most glaring of all is the sacrificial lamb, which seems almost to be missing from their meal. At the time of Jesus, the Passover lambs would be sacrificed by the priests in the temple and then taken home to be consumed by families at their respective celebrations. (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7) Jesus will, of course, become the definitive Passover Lamb of the new exodus that he will accomplish, not out of slavery in Egypt to right worship in the wilderness and the promised land of Canaan, but out of our slavery to sin to right worship in this valley of tears and the promised land of heaven. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8; Catechism of the Catholic Church 1340) Strangely though, he does not emphasize the lamb at the supper, but the bread and wine, which he proceeds to explain as being his own body and blood, in language similar to the Jewish Mishnah’s descriptions of the Passover lamb. His offering is in accord with the order of the ancient priest-king Melchizedek, whose offering to Abram was also one of bread and wine (Genesis 14:17-20), and ties it to two other key Old Testament prefigurations of the Eucharist.

The first is the manna that God provided as “bread from heaven” during Israel’s exodus journey. (Exodus 6:4-15) Lest one think that Jesus’ words at the Last Supper were mere metaphor, the Eucharist’s tie to the manna makes clear that the bread that Jesus provides is, in fact, miraculous. “I am the bread of life,” Jesus said. “Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (John 6:48-51) Just as the manna was miraculous, appearing and disappearing at precise intervals according to their exact need, so too, the heavenly bread which Jesus provides is miraculous in nature — “real food” and “real drink” to sustain us, not with the emptiness of pious sentiment but with the substantial Presence of God. (John 6:55-56; Catechism of the Catholic Church 1374-1375)

This Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is the culmination of the Old Testament “Bread of the Presence” (or more literally, the “Bread of the Face (of God)”), which was kept perpetually in the Tabernacle upon a golden table along with flagons of sacred wine (Exodus 25:23-30), was lifted up at the Jewish feasts for the people to see as a sign of God’s love for them (Babylonian Talmud, Menahoth 29A), and was offered by the priests as a “most holy” and

“**This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.**
— 1 Corinthians 11:25

”

unbloody sacrifice “every Sabbath day” to commemorate the heavenly banquet that Moses and the elders shared on Mount Sinai after beholding God there. (Exodus 24: 9-11; Leviticus 24:8-9)

Our Lord has been preparing us to receive and understand the sacrament of the Eucharist for a long time. It is the true fruit borne of the cross revealed as the tree of life, which he earnestly desires to share with us that we might be freed from our tragic slavery to sin and so have eternal life.

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Emmaus 90 Registration Open

Online registration is open for Emmaus 90, offering a unique path to build a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee designed Emmaus 90 in conjunction with the ongoing National Eucharistic Revival.

Details:

- > Starts Jan. 1 and lasts 90 days — until Easter Sunday.
- > Register by Dec. 10 to receive a hard-copy guidebook journal or print your own from a PDF if you register later.
- > Receive a daily prayer prompt, challenging practices to grow in holiness and a weekly 30-minute formation video to discuss with two to three fellow pilgrims in your family or beyond.
- > The cost is \$20 per pilgrim, but no one will be denied due to financial circumstances.

Register here: www.archmil.org/Emmaus-90.



The Eucharist as Thanksgiving

FR. RAÚL GÓMEZ-RUIZ S.D.S., PH.D.

This month we celebrate Thanksgiving in this country. It is a time when we pause to thank and praise God for the many blessings we have received. Personally, it is one of my favorite holidays, not just because of the good food. Mostly, it is one of my favorites because it reminds me of the most important thanksgiving feast of all — the Eucharist, which we celebrate every day, and which is a foretaste and participation in the heavenly banquet.

At Thanksgiving, we gather as family and friends to spend time together conversing or watching programs on TV, culminating in sharing the abundant food prepared by the host and others. As part of this meal, the participants acknowledge and express thanks for the many blessings they have received. The celebration unites us with one another, and we feel blessed. Furthermore, often it inspires us to share that blessing with others in need. So, we praise and thank God; to thank and praise God is to bless God who blesses us. Indeed, it is a special event.

In the Eucharist, we gather for a special event also: the salvation Jesus Christ provides us through his birth, life, Passion, Death and Resurrection. This is the Paschal Mystery, and so, we come to a special room, the church. We gather around a special table — the altar — as a family, the family of those who have been made brothers and sisters of the Lord through Baptism. In this place, we hear words of love, of encouragement and of gratitude from our host — the Lord himself — speaking to us through the Scriptures. We respond, with our own words of love and trust, through the responses to the readings, the singing of hymns and the offering of prayers.

The centerpiece of this feast is the great thanksgiving prayer — the Eucharistic Prayer — followed by the sharing of very special food, food from heaven: the Bread of Life and

the Chalice of Salvation, the Blessed Sacrament and the Precious Blood, the Body and Blood of Christ. And just like a Thanksgiving feast can unite those present and convey to them a sense of well-being, so it is with the Holy Mass: we become what we consume — the Body of Christ for the world. We come hungry: hungry for life, hungry for healing, hungry for guidance, hungry for grace, hungry for mercy. Also, just like at the family thanksgiving feast, there is an exchange. We give ourselves, our lives, to the Lord when we participate in the Eucharist. In exchange, we receive the fullness of life; that is, the Lord himself.

I praise and bless God for this great privilege. I praise and bless God for the gift of faith. I praise and bless God for a place where we can gather. I praise and bless God for the gift of you, people of faith. I pray that you and I will never withhold from God whatever he asks of us.

Whatever you give thanks and praise to God for, take it to your Thanksgiving meal. Whatever you give thanks and praise for then, bring back to the Eucharist. For in the Eucharist, we are to find our lives celebrated, and the Eucharist is to be found in the living out of our daily lives in turn. This is the Holy Eucharist as thanksgiving.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church gives various names for the Church's central celebration of the Paschal Mystery. "Eucharist" is the primary name the Church gives this celebration. There are other names such as the Lord's Supper, the breaking of bread, the synaxis or Eucharistic Assembly, the memorial of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Holy and Divine Liturgy, Holy Communion, and the Holy Mass.

**In the Eucharist,
we gather for a special
event also.**

The word "Eucharist" comes from the Greek "eucharistía" made up of two words: "eu" (good) and "charistia" (grace). So literally "eucharistía" means "good grace." It's the word used in Scripture for thanks and praise. So we gather in church for "eucharistía," to give thanks and praise to God who has convened us here and is forming us into a community; to give thanks and praise to God for the salvation and reconciliation he is providing us; to give thanks and praise to God for the graces he gives us through the holy sacrifice of the Mass; to give thanks and praise to God for the guidance he gives us through his word; to give thanks and praise to God for making us his partners in extending his reign into the world as instruments of his healing. Most importantly, we give thanks and praise to

God for the grace of loving us into life and for providing us a way to find the fullness of life he wants for us — eternal life — through our communion in the Body and Blood of Christ.

Eternal life. Eternal life is where every longing, every desire, every need for more is satisfied because we become fully what God has intended for us all along. That is why the Eucharist is thanksgiving.

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St. Francis Connected Manger to Eucharist

FR. BOB COOK, O.F.M. CONV.

St. Francis of Assisi is remembered for creating the very first Nativity scene at Greccio — a little Italian town near Rieti. St. Francis desired to recreate the stable of Bethlehem in order, according to Thomas of Celano, “to see as much as possible with his own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay.”

And so, on Christmas Eve 1223, with the manger scene arranged, St. Francis read from St. Luke’s account of the Lord’s birth and preached to the people. Celano tells us that “he seemed to lick his lips whenever he used the words ‘Jesus’ or ‘babe from Bethlehem,’ tasting the word on his happy palate and savoring the sweetness of the word.” When St. Francis stopped preaching, the place became radiant with a miraculous light and those present saw the Baby Jesus appear on the hay. St. Francis lifted the sleeping babe from the manger and held him in silent adoration. Thereupon, the baby vanished. The hay upon which the baby slept, it is said, was fed to sick animals, healing them from every kind of illness.

And it is from this event that the Franciscans began to promote mangers in churches and homes during the Christmas season — a beloved tradition that endures 800 years later.

What is not well known is that this miracle took place within the context of Mass. In fact, St. Bonaventure reports that St. Francis received special dispensation from the pope to construct an altar directly above the Greccio manger. For St. Francis, having the Eucharist offered inches above the manger was to recreate the Nativity because “in this world, I cannot see the Most High Son of God with my own eyes, except for his most holy Body and Blood.” The miraculous appearance of Jesus in the manger below the altar was only the first time he would be present in the stable that night. He would go on to appear a second time — in the Holy Eucharist upon the altar, in the form of bread and wine.

St. Francis of Assisi lived in a time not unlike our own — among



the faithful, there was great disbelief in the True Presence. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) — at which St. Francis was present — set in motion greater emphasis on the Holy Eucharist in the life of the Church. It is from this council that the doctrine of transubstantiation was first articulated, that the Blessed Sacrament came to be reserved in locked tabernacles and that the faithful were obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year during the Easter season. Lateran IV sparked new kinds of Eucharistic piety, such as the Feast of Corpus Christi and the first forms of Eucharistic Adoration before tabernacles.

When we see the first manger scene in this context, it becomes clear: at Greccio, St. Francis desired to make plain the connection between the nativity and Eucharist. Not to be outdone, our Lord gave us the miracle of Greccio to confirm his True Presence as a continuation of the Incarnation.

In Franciscan spirituality, this is called “the humility of God.” God emptied himself by taking on our human nature — as a poor and defenseless infant, by submitting to the cross. And, in his greatest act of humility, he further emptied himself by taking the form of bread and wine. All out of love for us.

As we enter into the Christmas season, may we see in our mangers the Humble God who continues to come to us at every Mass. In the words of St. Francis:

See the humility of God, and pour out your hearts before Him!

*O sublime humility!
O humble sublimity!
The Lord of the universe,
God and the Son of God,
so humbles Himself
that He hides Himself
for our salvation
under an ordinary piece of bread!*

Fr. Bob Cook, O.F.M. Conv., is the rector of the Basilica of St. Josaphat, Milwaukee.

“
Our Lord gave us the
miracle of Greccio
to confirm his
True Presence.
”

Eucharist Helps Us Find What's Missing

PETE BURDS
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD



My aunt was a lifelong “puzzler.” For decades, she had an entire room in her house devoted solely to her countless puzzles. Most days, she would take some time to labor away at intricate 1,000-piece puzzles of different shapes, sizes and levels of difficulty.

My lovely aunt recently passed away and, during her funeral Mass, the priest spoke about her well-known love for puzzles. The priest told a story about her oldest son who, to her surprise, would play a trick on her by stealing one puzzle piece. He would then place it somewhere in her house for her to find weeks later. So imagine, she would spend hours and hours getting 99.9 percent finished, but alas, she couldn't find the very last piece and would have to tear apart her whole house searching for it.

If we're honest, the truth is that there is an ache within us that isn't easily satisfied. Following the illustration, we always want the puzzle to be 100 percent complete and search frantically to find what's missing. The actor and comedian Jim Carrey famously said, “I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer.”

Regardless of all of the pursuits, riches or accomplishments, every person is left wanting more. The ache within us, our restless hearts, will always be searching for more. So, what's missing?

It is God who has placed this “ache,” or “capacity for God,” within us. He created us out of love, in love and for love. In a plan of sheer goodness, he chose us to share in his own blessed life. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1) We have been made for him. And every time we're reminded of this ache, it tells us that there is something, or better yet, someone we're looking for. Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) His promise of finding “what's missing” does not come through the pursuits of this world but rather coming closer to him.

Two thousand years ago, our invisible God went on a rescue mission. Jesus Christ came to be the visible face of God in the world. He came close to us. Jesus saves us by freeing us from sin and death, but also for us to live an abundant life with him. (John 10:10) Because of his life, Death and Resurrection, we can respond in faith and encounter his love today, here and now. Jesus Christ remains present to us, “visible” through the Church, the sacraments, Scripture, community, works of charity, but particularly through his Real Presence in the Eucharist.

Every time we walk into Mass, we can find the rest our hearts are searching for. We have the opportunity to come before him in wholehearted worship and rest in God who is here in the Eucharist.

Pope Benedict said, “The happiness you are seeking, the happiness you have a right to enjoy has a name and a face. It is Jesus of Nazareth, hidden in the Eucharist.”

And here, in the Eucharist, we find what's missing: Jesus Christ.

Pete Burds is the Vice President of Mission for NET Ministries in Minnesota.