

IIAAYL
It Is All About You, Lord!
By Deacon Paul

Today's topic is the REAL PRESENCE of the Lord in the Eucharist. I would like to start off with several stories, very short stories, of some of my prior experiences.

1... Several years ago, I was invited to a Methodist service. There were about 30 or 40 of us in attendance. It was called an "open altar" service since it was not exclusively Methodists in attendance. The Methodist minister stood behind an altar table and recalled the story of Jesus and the Last Supper. There was bread on the table. I would describe the bread as similar to white bread like we use for eating sandwiches. The Methodist minister reminded us how Jesus asked us to remember him by repeating this meal where Jesus would be present. All of us in attendance were asked to come forward and share in the bread. As we stood around chatting after the service the minister cleaned up the remaining pieces of bread and put them in the trash.

2... You can't take the engineer out of me! Several years ago, I got to wondering how often we Catholics offered Mass. Based on the data I found on the internet I did the math and found that, on the average, Mass is offered about four times per second! Four times each second the Lord comes again into the bread and wine.

3... Several years ago, I attended a lecture at a Lutheran conference. Most of the attendees were Lutheran but it was intended for people of all Christian denominations. I nearly fell out of my seat at the Lutheran minister's first comment in the lecture. "We Lutherans should do like the Catholics and have the Eucharist every Sunday, not just once per month!"

4... In one of my recent homilies I mentioned the "genius of God" for having the Eucharist excite each of our five human senses. Of course, we can see the bread and the wine. We can smell the sweetness of the wine. Our hands and tongue can feel the Eucharist. Our tongue can taste it. And even our ears can hear the bread being broken by the priest at the altar.

5... A fellow deacon told a story of his conversation with another Christian (not a Catholic). This other man told the deacon: "If I really believed that Jesus was present in the Eucharist I would be in front of that tabernacle, lying on the floor, flat on my chest, in awesome adoration."

More about these experiences later.

Let's look into the Sacred Scriptures for the source of our understanding of the Eucharist. In the Gospel of Luke, we read about the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper.

Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise, the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you." (Luke 22:19-20)

"My body." "My blood." "Do this in memory of me."

So, what did the early Christians do? St. Paul has some strong words about that in his First Letter to the Corinthians.

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? (1 Cor. 10:16). Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. (1 Cor. 11:27)

We Catholics call this fantastic occurrence of the body and blood of Jesus in the bread and wine the **"REAL PRESENCE"**. It's "mind-boggling"; it's "over-the-top"; it's an "ultimate treasure". The Church actually created a word to try to describe it, namely "transubstantiation". Back in the year 1551, the Council of Trent wrote the following. "By the consecration, the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity." [document called DS, paragraphs 1640 and 1651].

In more recent history, 1965, Pope Paul VI wrote the following: "This presence is called 'real' ... because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present." [Pope Paul VI's document *Mysterium Fidei*, paragraph 39]

Going back to the five stories I started with, let me comment on how the **"REAL PRESENCE"** fits into our Catholic lives.

1... For us Catholics the Mass is more than a way to remember what Jesus did 2000 years ago. The Mass is where the priest invites the Lord to be truly present in the bread and wine. That presence is not simply a temporary event. After Communion we take all the consecrated hosts and put them in a safe place, a tabernacle. Those hosts are then available when we wish to take them to someone in a hospital or to someone who is confined to their home or a senior citizen facility. Yes, Jesus remains in the host. The host is the **"REAL PRESENCE"**.

2... The humility of the Lord! At the average of four times per second, somewhere around the world, the Lord listens to the request of the priest or bishop, and enters into the bread and wine to become the **"REAL PRESENCE"** for some community of believers.

3... For centuries, from the early Church in the Bible until this very day, Sunday has been our primary day of worship at the Mass. And for centuries, the Mass has been said **daily** at churches, monasteries, convents, hospitals and other chapels. Yes, we crave the **"REAL PRESENCE"**!

4... Yes, God is truly a genius. God knows human beings and their senses. God instituted the Eucharist to get our attention through all the senses that God has given us. God is using our human senses so we get a sense of the **"REAL PRESENCE"**!

5... A question! How do each of react to the **"REAL PRESENCE"** as we return to our pew after receiving Holy Communion?