



**Thoughts from Glenna Benton,
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Finding Jesus in the Eucharist: Four Ways He Is Present Where is Jesus? As we celebrate Eucharist, this is the key question. Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, says “to contemplate Christ involves being able to recognize him wherever he manifests himself, in his many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of his body and his blood.” Lawrence E. Mick tells us, in the Catholic Update **Finding Jesus in the Eucharist: Four Ways He Is Present:**

The challenge of recognizing the face of Christ goes far beyond the Eucharist, for we are called to see his presence in all our brothers and sisters. The Eucharist, however, teaches us how to recognize him and where to look for him. If we grow in our ability to recognize when we gather to celebrate the mass, we will also find it easier to see his face around us all through the week.

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, which came out of the Second Vatican Council, tells us that Christ can be found in other ways in the Eucharist. Christ is always present in the Church, especially in its Eucharistic celebrations. The document, which echoes the teaching of Popes Pius X, XI, and XII, speaks of four modes of Christ’s presence. Christ is present in the Eucharist then, 1) in the assembly that gathers in Christ’s name, 2) in the priest or bishop who presides, 3) in the Word proclaimed in our midst, and 4) in the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine. Though they differ from each other, each of these presences is real, and each offers us a unique opportunity to recognize Christ with us.

Reverence is an essential part of our celebration of Eucharist. Lawrence Mick suggests that reverence means: to recognize and then respond to the presence of the divine. He says: “Before the Council, we expressed our reverence in negative ways. We didn’t talk in Church. We didn’t set foot in the sanctuary. We didn’t touch the chalice. We didn’t chew the host. All of these are valid ways to express reverence, but they are not the only ways. The renewed liturgy calls us to new ways of showing our reverence for the presence of the Lord.

“If Christ reveals his presence to us in four different ways during the celebration of the Eucharist, then reverence requires us to recognize and respond to his presence in each of these ways. As we do so, we become ever more attentive to his presence,

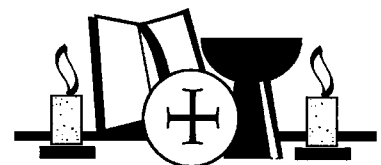
ever more aware of the variety of ways that we can encounter the Lord in our lives.

Today we will reflect on Jesus’ presence in the assembly and his presence in the presider. Jesus says that whenever two or more are gathered in his name, he will be present. When we gather at Church, he is in our midst. Jesus dwells in each of us. When we gather as the body of Christ at worship, we are called to recognize that presence in one another. Reverence calls us to recognize that presence and respond to it. It goes beyond friendly conversation. We are to connect with one another in a way that reminds us of our bond in Christ which expresses the love of Christ that unites us. Lawrence Mick says: “This kind of hospitality is essential if we are to enter into the celebration of the liturgy as one body in Christ. It is not the responsibility only of the ushers and greeters. All those who gather have the responsibility for creating hospitable worship. It’s the first way we show reverence for Christ, who reveals himself in those around us.”

The second way that Christ reveals his presence is in the presider. The priest or bishop is part of the assembly but he also takes a role of leadership and extends to us the invitation of Christ to worship the Father. Reverence requires us to respond to this invitation, which is really Christ’s invitation. We are called to enter into the worship internally and externally. “Singing the songs, saying the prayers and engaging in the actions of worship are all ways we respond to Christ who leads us in the liturgy.”

We must see Christ in the fully human person of the priest or bishop. God entered into our humanity as Jesus and continues to meet us through human beings. The very human priests and bishops, who preside over our liturgies, help us to recognize Christ in other human beings and in ourselves as well. Lawrence Mick says, “We do not have to be perfect for Christ to work through us or dwell in us. We just have to be human, open to the gift of his loving presence.”

Next week we will look at Jesus’ presence in the Word and in the meal – the body and blood which he offers as food and drink.



(Use permission as before with Catholic Update *Finding Jesus in the Eucharist: Four Ways He Is Present* by Lawrence E. Mick, July, 2005)