

Corpus Christi A 2020 SML
1COR 10:16-17
JN 6:51-58

While other churches prefer to live with a meaningless real absence, the Catholic Church prefers to live with a meaningful Real Presence.

An encyclical is a letter written by a pope on matters of great importance. The title of the encyclical comes from the first few words of the encyclical or letter, much like the names of many Catholic prayers comes from the first few words of the prayer, for example, the “Our Father . . . ,” the “Hail Mary . . . ,” the “Glory be . . . ,” the “Hail Holy Queen.” St. John Paul the Great wrote an encyclical entitled “*Ecclesia de Eucharistica*.” *Ecclesia* in Latin means “church” and *Eucharistica* in Latin means Eucharist. These words are taken from the first sentence of the encyclical, “The Church draws her life from the Eucharist.” In the encyclical, the Holy Father repeats the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist. When Catholics receive Holy Communion, they are truly, really and substantially receiving the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. As in all encyclicals, the Holy Father made rich use of scripture as the foundation for the Church’s teaching.

Regarding the Eucharist, obviously, John Paul used the scriptural references to the Last Supper, and this morning's second reading and gospel, to reaffirm the foundation for the Catholic Church's teaching on the Eucharist.

Beginning with the scriptural references to the Last Supper, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke's account, Our Blessed Lord gave us the Eucharist when He said the words of consecration for the first time: "This is my Body. This is my Blood. Do this in memory of me." In Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, the word "is" means "is." "Is" does not mean "symbolize." Is does not mean "signify." Is does not mean "represent." In Aramaic, "Is" means "Is!" It is what it is!

John, on the other hand, makes no mention of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. Rather, in John's gospel, Jesus washed feet, which is why there is the washing of feet at the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday night. However, in John Chapter 6, when the Jews quarreled about eating His flesh, John, in what scripture scholars call his Bread of Life discourse, clarifies the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, as found in this morning's gospel:

1. Twelve times Jesus said He was the bread that came down from heaven.

2. Four times He said we must “eat His flesh and drink His blood.”
3. Jesus said, “My flesh IS real food, my blood IS real drink.” “This IS my body. This IS my blood.” And the verb “IS” means “IS.” It does not mean represent, symbolize or remind.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, Our Blessed Lord gave His disciples the Great Commission. The Great Commission is all encompassing. It includes everything:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age. MT 28:18-20

All authority, make disciples of **all** the nations, observe **all** that I have commanded you, and I am with you **always**.

One, holy, catholic and apostolic are the four marks of the Church, or four ways to define the Catholic Church, the only Church, I’m quick to add, that is founded by the divine, founded by Christ, and Christ is God. Since the Church is “apostolic,” or founded on the Apostles, the Apostles taught everything. They taught all that they were commanded. And they changed none of it to suit themselves.

One way the Catholic Church remains “one” is to have consistency in her teaching. Our Holy Father Benedict worded it best when he wrote:

To have a clear faith according to the church's creed is today often labeled fundamentalism, while relativism, letting ourselves be carried away by any wind of doctrine, appears as the only appropriate attitude for today's times, (he said.) A dictatorship of relativism is established that recognizes nothing definite and leaves only one's own ego and one's own desires as the final measure . . . An adult faith does not follow the waves of fashion and the latest novelty.

And different winds of doctrine there have been, especially when it comes to the different beliefs regarding Eucharist. And there are different beliefs regarding the Eucharist, because other denominations are not apostolic. They do not teach all of it. Rather, they might add, delete or change something Christ taught, to suit themselves. For example:

Baptists, founded by John Smyth, who was not divine, but merely a man, in Amsterdam in 1605, do not believe in real presence, but more in a re-enactment than anything else. The bread and wine are merely symbols of our Blessed Lord, while Catholics believe the Eucharist IS our Blessed Lord. Again, this IS my Body. This IS my Blood.

Presbyterians, founded by John Knox, who was not divine, but merely a man, in 1560 in Scotland, also believe the bread and wine are merely symbols of our Blessed Lord.

Methodists, founded by John and Charles Wesley, who were not divine, but merely men, in England in 1744, also believe the bread and wine are mere symbols, but at the moment when one receives these symbols, they receive grace for that, but the bread and the wine never become the Body and Blood of Christ which contradicts the words Jesus said at the Last Supper.

Lutherans, founded by Martin Luther, who was not divine, but merely a man, in 1517 in Germany, believe in consubstantiation, which means a temporary real presence. Lutherans believe that at the end of their service, the real presence leaves the bread and wine, and any leftovers go back to the sacristy to be consecrated again at their next service.

Episcopalians, founded by King Henry VIII who was not divine, but merely a man, in England in 1534, believe in the real presence as Catholics do, that the bread and wine actually become the Body and Blood of Christ. However, from the Catholic point of view, since the Anglican Church broke from the Catholic Church, the ordination of their priests is not valid, and therefore Catholics do not believe Episcopalians enjoy the real presence, only Catholics do.

Catholics, founded by Christ, who is divine, in Jerusalem in the year 33 AD, believe in the real presence, that at the words of consecration, the priest, in *persona Christi*, in the “person of Christ,” changes the bread and wine, into the

Body and Blood of Christ, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, with only the species of bread and wine remaining.

What is most fundamental to the Church's unity is the Eucharist. The Eucharist is what unites us as Catholics. In his encyclical on the Eucharist, John Paul quoted this evening's (morning's) second reading:

Eucharistic communion also confirms the Church in her unity as the body of Christ. Saint Paul refers to this *unifying power* of participation in the banquet of the Eucharist when he writes to the Corinthians: "The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." (1Cor 10:16-17).

When it is all said and done, it's not about who is right and who is wrong. The point is having a relationship with God, who gave Himself to us in the Eucharist. The least we can do is give ourselves to Him. I thank God that in the Catholic Church, we actually receive Jesus, God in your hand, God in your heart, and not merely bread and wine. Stated simply, while other Churches prefer to live with a meaningless real absence, Catholics prefer to live with a meaningful Real Presence.

While we were in the pandemic, before Mass was offered outside, I was so very conscious how difficult this pandemic

must be for those who were not able to adore Our Blessed Lord and receive Holy Communion, so very conscious how blest I was to do both. When the in car Masses were offered, the overarching theme was the opportunity, at long last, to receive Holy Communion.

As to the last part of the Divine Commission, “and I will be with you Always,” this is made very possible in the Eucharist. For if I were to ask where is Our Blessed Lord in the midst of this pandemic, whether we have access to Him or not? He’s right here. He’s right here in the Tabernacle. And, as one parishioner said to me as she was walking about the property during the pandemic but before the parking lot Masses, “Father, when we are able to receive Holy Communion again, there won’t be a dry eye!”