

Pastor's Message

Last week in my pastor's message I spoke about the role of the *epiclesis*, the calling down of the Holy Spirit, on us and on the bread and the wine. In the Eastern Catholic churches (Greek and Russian Orthodox and others), the belief is that the *epiclesis* consecrates the bread and the wine. In our western Roman Catholic church we have always believed that it is the words of institution that consecrates: "Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you." and Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for the many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me." In either case it is the power of the Holy Spirit that changes the bread and the wine (and ultimately us) into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Do you remember your Latin? In Latin, the words of consecration are **Hoc est enim corpus meum**, which translated means **This is indeed my body**. Scholastic theologians of the middle ages decided that it was at the word "*meum*" that the bread actually became the body of Christ. This focus on the moment of mystery made it seem to non-believers like magic and so from "hoc est ...corpus" we get hocus pocus which means a magic trick. The changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus is not a magic trick. It is the deep mystery of a communal meal which the Lord asked us to do with and for one another. The Lord assures us that if we do this sacrificial meal together and remember him, he will be present among us. And so we do and so we believe. Not magic but deep mystery. Not one moment of consecration but an entire celebration of a meal which opens us up to the deeper meaning of our discipleship, our call as followers of Jesus Christ.

While we are discussing the words of institution it is worth asking who actually is calling down the Holy Spirit on the gifts of bread and wine? Is it the priest alone? In our Eucharistic prayer (EP 3) it becomes clear who is doing the consecrating: "Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you, by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts for consecration,..." We all through the voice of the priest presider consecrate the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus. It is not solely the power and prerogative of the priest to consecrate; that power resides in the whole community. We need each other to make Jesus present among us. As Jesus tells us: *For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them*. At Mass we need each other to make Jesus present once again in our world.

Fr. Chris