

Teaching the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist

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Various studies in recent years have revealed a disturbing fact: less than half of people who identify as Catholics believe in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ. The Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is a central tenet of our Catholic faith. We believe that, in the Eucharist, Jesus Christ is truly though mysteriously present to us under the appearance of ordinary bread and wine.

Is this a difficult concept to teach to children (and adults)? Yes and no. On the one hand, it is challenging to teach a mystery, perhaps because, in reality, we don't teach mystery; we invite others to encounter it and experience it. Certainly, we catechists are responsible for predisposing others to receive the sacrament, ensuring that they have a concept and understanding of what they are about to receive. However, we don't teach the Real Presence of the Eucharist like we teach a mathematical or scientific theorem. Rather, we prepare people to see with their hearts.

One of the best examples I ever heard of someone doing this effectively was the woman who introduced my mom to the Eucharist when my mom was 13 years old. Mom grew up under very difficult circumstances, and her parents never had her baptized or brought to

the sacraments. Her best friend at the time, however, was a very devout Catholic, and Mom tagged along with her (Ramona) wherever she went—including church. My mom grew curious about the Communion Rite and asked Ramona’s mom, “What do you go up there to get?” Ramona’s mom broke into a big smile and said, “Oh, Babe (my mom’s nickname), the greatest gift you can ever dream of receiving!”

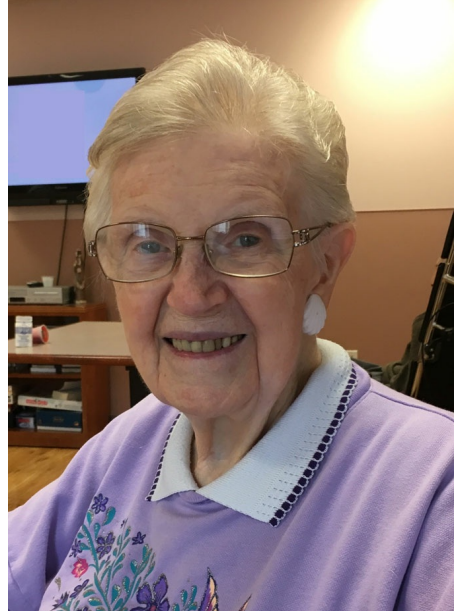
That’s it!

She didn’t offer any theology; that came later when my mom attended “Baptism classes.” However, she predisposed my mom to enter into a mysterious encounter through which she would receive the greatest gift imaginable—the very presence of God within us! My mom, now about to turn 90 and living in a nursing home, has been and continues to be a daily communicant since the age of 14, compelled by the desire to receive the “greatest gift you can ever dream of receiving!”

This is what is at the heart of teaching the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist!



My mom was baptized and received her First Communion when she was 14.



My mom, soon to turn 90, has been a daily communicant since she became Catholic at the age of 14.

Have you seen *God's Gift*, the sacramental preparation program for First Eucharist and Reconciliation?