

A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

If you are reading this bulletin article before or after Mass this weekend, I encourage you to go to the parish hall and check out the large exhibit on the miracles associated with the Holy Eucharist. This exhibit helps us as Catholics to keep in the forefront of our minds one of the critical truths of the Catholic faith: the Holy Eucharist is truly God present among His people.

Last week I wrote about how the Holy Eucharist marks us as belonging to God's people. This week I wish to write on how the Holy Eucharist transforms us to be more like Jesus Christ, the Son of God. When we as Catholics say that God has saved us from our sins, we do not imagine that God has merely issued some form of edict that says in effect "not guilty," but then leaves us as the same sinful people that we were before the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross. God's saving plan for the human race is grander than just making a declaration of innocence. Indeed, God's saving plan is for His people to become holy and innocent. As we cannot become holy and innocent on our own; God provides to us the means to accomplish His saving plan of restoration of holiness and innocence. The Holy Eucharistic is the greatest means that God has provided to us to carry out this great design.

The Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, has a transformative effect upon us. This transformation is from being a sinful man or woman separated from God to a holy man or woman united to God. To achieve this great change (and what a change it is) it is necessary that the Eucharist itself be great. There is nothing and no one greater than Jesus Christ who is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. When we as Catholics say that the Holy Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ, that is exactly what we mean. Although its appearance may seem to be ordinary bread and wine its reality is that of God Himself. There is no greater means of transformation in all of existence. God truly desires us, His people, to become more like His Son Jesus Christ; and He has provided the means to do so.

Now, it is true that the Holy Eucharist does not normally have a "magical" effect on us. People do not often receive Holy Communion and walk away radically transformed in that moment completely freed from vice and sin. While it would certainly be convenient for us if God did work this way, the truth is God does not want to control us or take us over. God does not desire slaves who have no choice but to do as He says. Rather, God desires sons and daughters who willingly choose to follow him. We are meant to cooperate with God's gift of the Holy Eucharist. This means that we must be free to cooperate fully or partially or not at all with the transformative effect of the Holy Eucharistic. We human beings struggle to cooperate fully with God's saving power so our progress in transformation is often slow, uneven, and sometimes it runs in reverse. Yet, God continues to provide the means of becoming more like Christ to us so that however long it may take we may continue to participate in God's great plan of salvation for us.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff
Pastor