



Exploring the presence of Christ both inside and outside the Mass

Prior to His ascension to the right hand of the Father, Jesus makes us a beautiful promise: “Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Since that time, the Church finds Jesus in the midst of His believers, in the proclamation of His word, and in the action of the Sacraments. But She encounters Him most fully in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Jesus’ Eucharistic presence is called “real”—a term that doesn’t imply that His other existences with us are somehow “unreal,” but “to indicate presence *par excellence*, because it is substantial and through it Christ becomes present whole and entire, God and man” (Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, 39). In other words, by the power of God, the priest’s words over the bread and wine at Mass change the substance of these elements into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus. Unlike the other presences of Christ in the Mass, however, the Eucharistic presence of Jesus remains long after the Mass has ended.

People are present to one another in many ways: in thought, in memory, in bodily proximity, in sympathy. So too with Jesus: His presence in our midst is as real as any other. What a comfort that He remains with us as He promised! For centuries, His saints and faithful have had Christ as a real companion on their journey to the Promised Land.

Questions for reflection:

1. Consider Jesus’ promise to be with us until the end of time. How do you encounter Christ’s presence in your life, especially during Mass?
2. How would you explain to a friend or family member (in your own words, but informed by the Scriptures and the Church’s teaching) the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist at Mass and outside of Mass?
3. Pew Study research suggests that 69% of Catholics do not believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. What do you think are some of the biggest obstacles to holding this belief?

Ideas:

1. Consider beginning or joining a study group that learns and prays about Jesus’ Real Presence.
2. Review and renew how the demeanor, dress, and actions of both ministers and laity can express belief (or unbelief) in the Real Presence at Mass.
3. Participate in occasions for Eucharistic adoration or Eucharistic processions to foster belief in the Real Presence.

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