



The Joy of Encountering Jesus in the Eucharist

The world situation is grim these days. We see brutal terrorism and fighting in the Middle East, Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, the continued scourge of abortion, painful confusion about gender identity, and the widespread conviction that our country is headed in the wrong direction. Our plea to Mary in the *Memorare* is especially appropriate right now: "To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears." It seems there is much misery in our world, and little cause for joy. But that's not true. Jesus has prepared us for this.

It is a paradox that on the eve of His Passion and death, Jesus, in His farewell discourse to the apostles, picked that very occasion to speak to them – twice – of joy. First, after proclaiming that He is the vine, and we are the branches, and that we can bear fruit only in union with Him, he said: "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete." Later in the same discourse, He said: "You...are now in anguish. But I will see you again, and your hearts will *rejoice*, and no one will take your joy away from you."

Yes, Jesus has called us to take up our crosses and to follow Him on the path of suffering, and there must be no illusions about that; but the destination is Risen Life with Him in eternal joy! And that joy is available to us even now, if only we are united with Him, so that "His joy may be in us" and "our joy may be complete."

How can that happen? Above all, it can happen when we receive the incredible gift of Jesus Himself – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – in Holy Communion. But not if we sleepwalk through it. We need to be wide awake. If we "recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread," like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, our "hearts will burn within us," as theirs did. And that is the point of the Eucharistic Revival, to awaken us to the joy of encountering and knowing Jesus in the Eucharist.

That joy has tremendous depth and is not dependent on the circumstances of life. The situations we face in our lives and in the world may be like the roaring waves and wind of a storm at sea, but the joy of union with Jesus goes much deeper, like the still waters far below the ocean's surface. As the saints have attested, we find there a joy and a peace that is unshakable. So, receive Jesus in Communion with prayerful attention and gratitude, daily if you can. Kneel before Him in adoration and ask Him to flood your life with His grace. Do this, and as He said, "no one will take your joy away from you."

Questions for reflection:

1. Recall a time when you felt special joy in prayer, or in an awareness of God's presence and grace in some moment or situation in your life. How was that joy different from worldly happiness?
2. Have you sometimes felt deep joy in receiving Jesus in Holy Communion? What steps can you take to help open yourself up to that grace and joy?

Ideas:

1. Pray before receiving Jesus in Holy Communion, asking Him to help you to experience the joy of being united to Him. Pray this on your way to Mass (even the night before). Take some time to pray in thanksgiving after Holy Communion, lingering on your knees after Mass has ended.
2. Adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, whether at one of the adoration chapels around the diocese (see diolc.org/adoration), or before the tabernacle in your parish church.