

# FROM THE PASTOR'S



## Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ, May 25, 2008 A

### HOW DIFFERENT PEOPLE EXPERIENCE CHRIST AT MASS EXPECTED & UNEXPECTED WAYS

The following are excerpts from the October '07 issue of the magazine *U.S. Catholic*. Readers were invited to write a mini-essay on how they experienced Christ at Mass.

#### **Elizabeth, a seven year old writes:**

Get ready. This is an amazing reflection.

*When I come into Mass I see Christ standing by me. I see him watching Mass. He looks at me when I look at him. I greet him and he greets me back. When people read, Christ is by them. At Communion the Eucharistic ministers are handing out bread. Christ is by them. When the priest is talking, he asks about Christ. Christ is explaining it to me. Christ is with me all the time—I feel it in my heart.*

*When I am singing, he is singing with me. Christ is at every Mass. I see him every time I go. When Mass is over, I see Christ reading the gospel or saying a prayer. When Christ is finished, he goes up to heaven. This is how I encounter Christ at Mass.*

#### **In the Joyful Noise—David writes:**

*I am not an emotional man, but I still seek to find God, the living Christ, and I meditate upon what I have found along the way. Where I have found him is in the music at Our Lady of the Holy Angels Catholic Church in Little Falls, New Jersey. It is the sound of angels. As the congregation and the musicians make music together and the celebration of the Mass progresses, I find myself drawn into that celebration of the Body and Blood of Christ.*

*I had always wondered what heavenly singing would sound like with so many of us “tone-challenged” people singing among the many throngs of heavenly hosts. This, I think, might be it. There are, however, no paid soloists or professional musicians. So what accomplishes this effect? I must say that it is that the assembly sings from the heart. They, too, it seems, have experienced the living Christ.*

*“Music has charms to soothe a savage breast,” wrote William Congreve. And here I have discovered that Christ is found in the joyful noise.*

#### **Christ Behind Bars. J.R. writes:**

*I have been incarcerated for 11 years and have a few more years to serve before I am released. Daily I am confronted with the challenges of prison life, the mundane existence of a system geared to tear down, not rehabilitate. As proven by the great saints of the past, trials and burdens can translate into spiritual growth, should we desire it.*

*Experiencing Christ, not only at Holy Mass but wherever I happen to be, has become a very intimate and personal time for me. When we are able to celebrate the Holy Mass, I enjoy just sitting quietly before the Lord to prepare myself to receive the Eucharist. When unable to attend Mass due to institutional security, I find the same Spirit as I lie upon my bed meeting the Lord in spiritual communion.*

*I envision Jesus lovingly welcoming me into his arms; not to chastise or rebuke, but simply to bathe me with his presence. In his arms, as I hug the Trinity, my sins and shortcomings make my heart ache with shame. At the same time I sense a tremendous, unconditional love.*

*I cannot boast of great visions or revelations, for there have been none. Instead my normal mundane day in the life is replayed, shortcomings and impure thoughts brought to mind. However before long my blessings take center stage. Prayer needs grab my attention. The needs are great in my prison environment; they can be overwhelming. I strive to unite myself with the communion of saints, taking comfort in the myriad of fellow intercessors. I am not alone.*

*My needs somehow take a back seat. God allows me to reach out to other prodigals. Even the smallest of gestures is multiplied and the kingdom is advanced. Sinful man though I am, I have a peace I would not trade for all the riches and gold. Perhaps my life is not so mundane after all.*

#### **Three Presences of Christ at mass**

The following piece is an excerpt from someone who was helping with a retreat for high schoolers. Mary writes:

*My “aha” moment happened ironically enough at Mass, in front of the tabernacle, the source of so much of my angst. On the last night family and friends packed the chapel for the closing Mass. At*

*Communion the priest motioned for all the students to gather behind and around the altar after receiving to make room for others to receive. After Communion I returned to my spot in the back of the chapel, amazed to see the Body of Christ before my eyes, not in two species, but in three: bread, wine, and human. Gazing upon this mass of joyful students, I joined them in singing a familiar refrain, "We are one body, one body in Christ. And we do not stand alone. . . ." And that moment I knew that God had not abandoned me, even if I was feeling a bit rebellious. What I began to comprehend was that no church document could dictate where and how I met Christ, that Christ was on the faces and in the hearts of each of us, especially these young people.*

*Today, when I struggle with the messiness of the institutional church, I draw strength and hope from that experience that renewed my belief in the Real Presence of Christ.*

Church documents speak about four presences of Christ as Mass: in the assembly gathered, in the presider, in the Word and most of all in the Body and Blood of Holy Communion.

### **Christ hugging me at Mass.**

Mary, a single lady writes:

*One bitterly cold January day, I was fighting a blustery wind as I made my way to Chicago's St. Peter's Church in the Loop for an early Mass before work. In my misery I cried out, "lord, see how much I love you." inwardly I heard his response: "You're not going to Mass because you love me. You're going because you know there is Someone there who loves you." how true that was.*

*Being single and working 500 miles away from my parents and siblings was lonely at times. At Mass I felt I belonged, that I was loved and cherished in a way not found anywhere else. It's like the hug I received one Christmas when I couldn't make it back home. I was delivering parish dinners to shut-ins, feeling very much alone and desperately in need of a hug.*

*My last delivery was around 2 p.m. The lady who opened the door was so grateful to see me, she surprised me with a hug that about cracked my ribs.*

*That's what Mass means to me—Jesus welcomes me with a hug so hard it about cracks my ribs. In the silence after Communion, wishing I could love him more, I lean on the Lord's heart like John at the Last Supper and return the hug. There is, indeed, Someone there who loves me.*

### **Living the Eucharist**

I don't know who wrote the following reflection, but it is very powerful.

*She heaved her large frame onto the bus,  
pregnant and laden with packages  
she noticed with dismay all the seats were taken.  
The man, over eighty, palsied arms beckoned,  
he stood and offered his seat.  
He was eucharist!*

*He spent his days pecking through garbage,  
looking for the treasure -  
aluminum cans, redeemable for pennies.  
Crowds hustled by, staring, jostling and fearing him  
for his appearance was strange.  
But he always took time to return their stares with a  
big smile and a good morning—good day, greeting.  
He was eucharist!*

*The new secretary at the law office  
panicked at the computer's non-cooperation.  
Her frenzied keyboard mania was evident  
to the senior law partner, about to rush through  
the door for an important hearing.  
He backtracked, and offered his help,  
reassuring and calming jangled nerves.  
He was eucharist!*

### **And the Church says:**

We believe that when the Church gathers, Mass is celebrated with the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and within the Eucharist, bread and wine are presented and prayed over, the Spirit of God descends and makes those elements into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The Church has insisted from the earliest times that this is the "real presence" of Christ, that is, real in the fullest sense a substantial presence by which Christ, both God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present (CCC 1374). Why? Most especially because Jesus himself promised this and secondarily because the apostles and those who have followed in this church have experienced it to be so.

The substantial change that takes place within the elements of bread and wine are a conversion. Indeed, the term in our tradition for the change which takes place is "transubstantiation" (CCC 1376).

This Eucharistic presence of Christ continues as long as the Eucharistic species (the bread and wine) subsist. We also believe that the real presence of Jesus experienced wholly and totally in each of the elements, such that while an individual consumes only the Eucharistic bread both body and blood are received and if only the Eucharistic wine is consumed both

body and blood of Christ are received (CCC1377). In connection with the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church also teaches that at Mass Christ is recognized and experienced in the assembly of people who gather, in the person of the presider, in the proclamation of the Word and in the Eucharistic species (GIRM 7).

### **Thank You Birthday Wishes**

This past Wednesday, I celebrated my 61st Birthday. A big thank you to all who sent greetings my way.

Have a blessed week,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Le Saron". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

### *Prayer for this Feast*

*Body of Christ, open me to  
Your whole body-  
the People of God.  
Blood of Christ, cleanse me  
from all sin and wrongdoing  
both inside and out.*

*I ask that your presence in the eucharist  
be a sign to me of  
our covenant of love;  
won through sacrifice and suffering.*

*May the Eucharist inspire me to become  
a sign of your presence in the world  
as I make myself present to others.*