

Scratching the surface of an 'inexhaustible mystery'

Under the direction of Bishop Roger Foys, the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization has teamed up with the *Messenger* to produce this and four subsequent special sections on the Eucharist. Long-term readers of the *Messenger* will recognize these articles since they were published previously. However, they have been re-structured by themes and re-designed as "pull-outs" in the hope that you will consider collecting them and keeping them for future reference. This series on the Eucharist covers a variety of topics, but, of course, with limited space and the fact that this is an exploration at the very center of theology, we are only scratching the surface here. I hope that reading these short articles inspires you to explore more and to take every opportunity you are given to meet our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Our faith is born from and expressed in theology (speech about God). Theology, in turn, remains, as St. Anselm once defined it, a matter of "faith seeking understanding." What we believe, we try to understand further; when we understand further, we believe more deeply. To grow in the faith means to engage in this cyclical process of seeking God. The reason we want to grow in faith is so that we can love God all the more.

Not long ago a Pew Research study reported that "Just one-third of U.S. Catholics agree with their Church that the Eucharist is the body, blood of Christ."

This particular study noted that "... nearly seven-in-ten Catholics (69 percent) say they personally believe that during Catholic Mass, the bread and wine used in Communion 'are symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.' Just one-third of U.S. Catholics (31 percent) say they believe that 'during Catholic Mass, the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus.'"

This, understandably, caused shock waves to resound throughout the Church for anyone who was paying attention. However, there is reason to believe that we shouldn't panic — yet. In this case, hopefully at least, things don't seem to be as bad as they first appear. One factor to consider is sample size. The Disciple Maker Index, administered by the Catholic Leadership Institute, has currently surveyed 131,845 Catholics around the country about multiple themes connected with parish life. (By contrast, the PEW survey was based on 1,835 Catholics in a total sample population of 10,971.)

When asked about doctrines of the faith, 72 percent of the DMI respondents strongly agreed with the statement "I personally believe the Eucharist really is the body and blood of Jesus Christ." Another 19 percent agreed with that statement. That's almost 120,000 Catholics claiming they do agree with what the Church teaches, compared to the 569 respondents highlighted in the PEW results.

Also, when considering the PEW survey, it has been pointed out that phraseology may have been an issue. The word "actually," used in the Pew study, may have been interpreted as referring to a physical change, which would explain why few Catholics chose that response. If so, they were correct, in that the Church does not teach that there is a physical change in appearance.

Long before the word "coronavirus" was part of our daily speech, our Catholic churches weren't exactly overflowing with people on a weekly basis. With the exception of Christmas and, maybe, Easter, most people weren't worried about arriving early to Mass so that they could find a seat. There are many factors and explanations for this that could be explored. But I think it's fair to say that the general long-term trend in the Eastern and Northern parts of our country has been a steady decline in numbers.

Now, in the post-pandemic-of-2020 world, there is, understandably, anxiety among those who care for souls what Mass attendance numbers will look like when all of this is over, and what the long-term effects will be on the sacramental life of the Church. Being forced away from the sacraments, even if it was only for a short time, could easily cause confusion for the faithful, or even, God forbid, a notion that the sacraments are not needed for salvation. For believers, the Catechism of the Catholic Church does not mince words about this and affirms that "the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation." (n. 1129)

There's a story about an evangelical Protestant preacher who once said, "If I truly believed what you Catholics say you believe, you would have to pull me away from the tabernacle. If I believed that my Lord was physically present in the church building I would never leave." Now, of course, we can't just stay in front of the tabernacle any more than Peter, James and John could stay up on the mountain with Jesus after he was transfigured (Mt. 17:1-10), but the message remains the same and the point is well taken. For us believers there is kind of a paradox: People don't go to Mass because they don't believe in the Real Presence, and they don't believe in the Real Presence because if it were true, then wouldn't the churches be full?

Like everything else in our lives, "it's complicated." But, here is one thing we can be sure of: Catholic theologians and teachers, as well as parents and Godparents, will always have work to do in communicating belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, since the notion and reality of transubstantiation remains "an inexhaustible mystery." You have to start somewhere and these editions of the *Messenger* are the perfect place.

— David Cooley, Co-director and Office Manager,
Office of Catechesis and Evangelization



An image of Melchizedek, portrayed in a mural in the Blessed Sacrament chapel of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption.

The book of Genesis (14:18-20) identifies Melchizedek as the king of Salem. According to tradition, the word "Salem" corresponds to "Jerusalem." Another possibility, however, proposes that the word "salem" is another form of the Hebrew word for peace, "shalom." Melchizedek, then, would be a king of peace, an ally with Abram. To celebrate a successful battle, Melchizedek offers a sacrifice of bread and wine in thanksgiving for a victory. He says, "Blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand." Melchizedek is a *type* of Christ and this offering of bread and wine foreshadows the Eucharist.

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Real Presence in the Eucharist

Father Jeffrey VonLehmen

In the Gospels Jesus says, "This is my body" and "This is my blood." What does that mean to each of us?

How is Jesus present in the Eucharist?

Most of us, at one time or another, find ourselves either asking that question or trying to explain the mystery for someone else. Catholics believe that the Body and Blood of Jesus are present in consecrated bread and wine. We do not say the Eucharist is like the Body and Blood of Jesus, but that it is the Body and Blood of Jesus.

In the Gospels, Jesus says, "This is my body," and "This is my blood." That is strong language. It is language



Christians have sought to understand for many centuries. In the Eucharist, we proclaim the mystery of faith. And it is a mystery! But the mystery of the kingdom of God and the Eucharist is meant to be obvious although it cannot be reduced to human logic. Sometimes, what is most obvious is most overlooked.

I invite you to look at the obvious — our ordinary human experiences — to help make sense of the Eucharist and Real Presence. Why does it make sense for Catholics to believe in what traditionally has been called transubstantiation (the changing of the whole substance of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ)? Why is it important to say that the Eucharist is a concrete encounter of the community with Jesus and not just a spiritual thing between an individual and God? In our own human experience, we can discover why real presence and the body-and-blood presence of Christ are important to us and to God.

Flesh and Blood Relationships

We often think of spiritual as invisible. But who wants an invisible relationship with a loved one?

Consider this example. A father leaves work early on a weekday, drives five hours to another city to be present at his son's college basketball game, and then drives home the same night. The father arrives home about 5 a.m., catches an hour of sleep, and then goes to work.

He does this often. Perhaps it would be enough to tell his son over the phone that he is thinking about him and cheering and praying for him. But think how much more it means to the child that his father is not just there in spirit — he is there in flesh. He is providing real presence for his son. What a big difference!

When we love someone, we want a concrete relationship, and the loving Spirit of God always seeks a body-and-blood relationship with us. That's what we celebrate in the

Easter.

The Spirit dwells in us so we might experience God, who wants a real relationship with us. We need a body-and-blood relationship with God in Christ. Yet we can only begin to understand the body and blood of Jesus when we understand true love in relationships involving friends, family and marriage.

Sacrifice and Life

Think in terms of word associations. When I say "green" someone might think of grass. When I say "blue," one might think of the sky. In our culture, when someone

Incarnation at Christmas and in the death and resurrection of Jesus on Good Friday and

cretely through the umbilical cord of the Holy Spirit.

Demonstrating the importance of this sacrament, a Catholic visionary once said, "If I had a choice between a vision and the Eucharist, I would choose the Eucharist." Truly the Eucharist is a real, interpersonal encounter between God and the worshiping community precisely because Christ is body-and-blood present. Our human experiences of love and relationships tell us that any lover seeks concrete union with the beloved.

The love expressed in the Eucharist is as old as Christmas. It is like the love between a mother and her infant in the womb. It is the love of God in Christ for his people not yet fully born into the reign of God: "... the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world, ... Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink." (John 6:51-56)

The Different Modes of Christ's Presence

In order that they should achieve a deeper understanding of the mystery of the Eucharist, the faithful should be instructed in the principal ways in which the Lord is present to his Church in liturgical celebrations.

He is always present in a body of the faithful gathered in his name (see Matt 18:20). He is present, too, in his Word, for it is he who speaks when the Scriptures are read in the Church.

In the sacrifice of the Eucharist he is present both in the person of the minister; "the same now offering through the ministry of the priest who formerly offered himself on the cross," and above all under the species of the Eucharist. For in this sacrament Christ is present in a unique way, whole and entire, God and man, substantially and permanently. The Sacred Congregation of Rites, instruction on the Worship of Eucharistic Ministry, states that this presence of Christ under the species "is called 'real' not in an exclusive sense, as if the other kinds of presence were not real, but par excellence." (Sacred Congregation of Rites, instruction on the Worship of Eucharistic Ministry, no.9)

The Body of Christ

There is no doubt that a body-and-blood relationship exists between a mother and her child. But they don't think of each other as body and blood. They think about the human relationship between them, whether or not it is a mutually loving relationship. It's the same way in the Eucharistic celebration. We have a body-and-blood relationship with God in Christ. In this encounter, we no longer get stuck on the elements of bread and wine, Body and Blood. This is because we experience persons instead of things, relationships instead of magic. Real reverence has to be for the person of Christ and for all people for whom he died — the two are inseparable. That is why people are called the body of Christ.

We cannot have reverence for the Body and Blood of Christ — the person of Christ — if we knock down those for whom he died out of love. For this reason, people are the body of Christ. Scripture always says it so well: "Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me." (Matt 25:45) "If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar." (1 John 4:20) In speaking of the condemnation of the unjust steward, Matthew's Gospel says, "So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart." (Matt 18:35)

It is simple: we must have reverence for one another. We cannot help but want a community of compassion, mercy, peace and justice. We recognize that we all come from the same womb of God, the love of God poured out into our hearts through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit signed and sealed in the body-and-blood relationship we have in Christ.

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says "blood," we probably think of something terrible, of violence or loss of life. When we hear about body and blood as sacrifice, as in the sacrifice of the Mass, we think somebody or something has been killed. But in the ancient Hebrew mentality, if an animal was sacrificed to God, the people did not think the animal was killed to appease an angry God. Instead, they thought of blood as the presence of life. Sacrifice was not so much giving up their best lamb or the first and best part of their crop. Sacrifice meant communion of life.

This brings to mind the wonderful image of an infant in the mother's womb. The infant is being nourished through the umbilical cord by the body and blood of the mother. The baby is receiving life! The mother's body is making all kinds of changes and sacrifices for the infant in her womb, and the mother is very conscious of the communion she has with her infant. The bond between mother and baby is truly a body-and-blood relationship.

The bond between God, our loving parent, and us is just as strong and concrete. God wants a body-and-blood relationship with us, and this concrete relationship is made possible in Christ. God so loved the world that he sent his only Son. Christ's sacrifice in becoming one like us in the Incarnation and in his passion on the Cross establishes a communion of life, a real presence in which we are assured that God desires us as much as we desire him.

The bread and wine are not simply like the body and blood of Christ they are the body-and-blood presence of Christ. This is because our relationship is that concrete, that real, that wonderful! Jesus is God revealing God's self to us. Neither God nor we want an invisible relationship — we want the real thing!

We can increase our understanding of God's presence during the Eucharistic prayer and Communion by thinking about being in the womb of God where we are fed con-

'In the Beginning ...' The Eucharist prefigured in the Old Testament

Dr. Alma Burnette

"In the beginning when God created Elohim (...) the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:1

In the center of this verse, in Hebrew, is an untranslatable word, which is two Hebrew letters — the "aleph" and the "tav" — the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In Greek the letters are the Alpha and the Omega. It serves the grammatical purpose of being the direct object pointer. These two letters form a concept rather than an actual word. They represent all the words of God by which all things were spoken into existence, including the Eucharist. These two letters are peppered throughout the Old Testament, seasoning its meaning. The rabbis teach:

When the Messiah comes he will explain the meaning of the aleph and the tav. And he did in Revelation: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Rev. 22:12) The same concept is in John 1:1.

When God made man, he made him out of the earth's pre-created dust and breathed life into the lifeless form, bringing man into being by his previously spoken words, "Let us make man in our image."

During the Mass the priest says, "Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life. ... Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink."

The priest is exercising his ordained authority to bring life to the lifeless bread and wine, previously made by human hands, fulfilling Christ's previous words, "This is my body. ... This is my blood."

Just as the lifeless form of the first Adam, became a living soul so the lifeless form of the bread and wine become the body, blood, soul and divinity of the second Adam, Christ.

In Genesis 2 God causes a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and from his side comes forth Eve. Adam exclaims, "This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." God allowed Christ to die, a deep sleep for his body, and his side, too, was opened (pierced) for the Church to come forth. St. Paul writes, "Because we are members of his body we are of his flesh and of his bone." (Eph 5:30) How so? By the Eucharist being consumed at the Mass, the marriage supper of the Lamb.

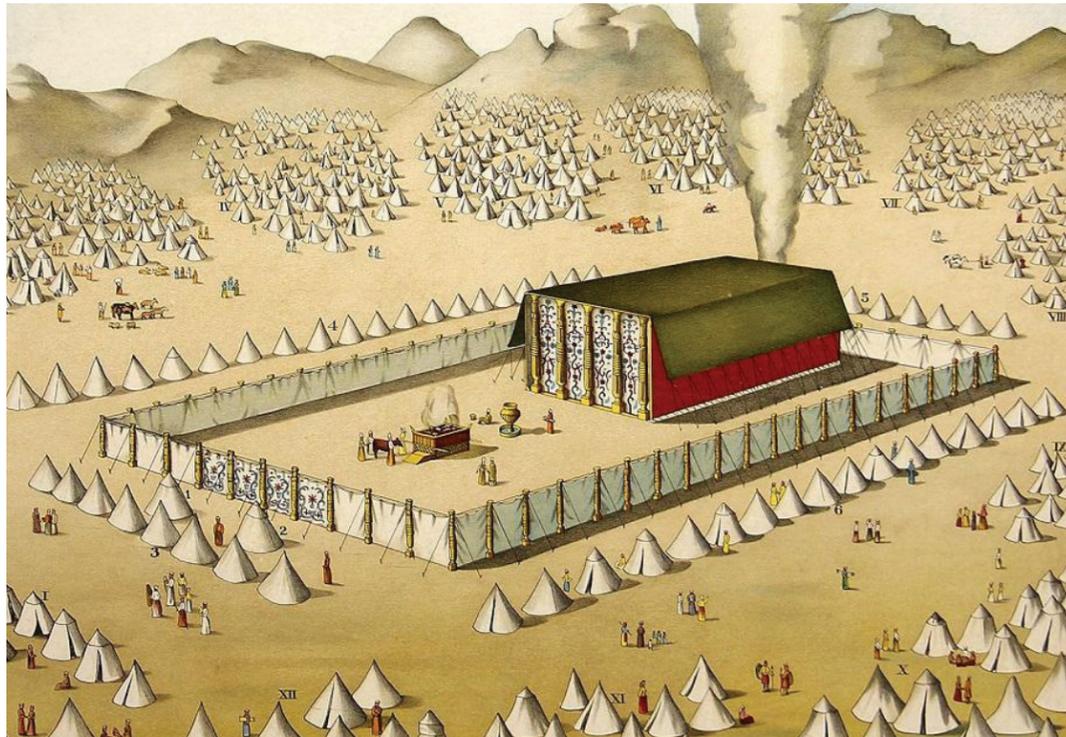
In Genesis 2 and 3 the two trees planted in the middle of the garden foreshadow the Eucharist. It was a rabbi who once explained it to me.

The fruit of the trees was manna. The tree of life had unleavened manna and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had leavened manna, both heavenly bread." Evidence of this is found in Genesis 3:19: "In the sweat of your face shalt thou eat bread ..."

The word "fruit" means more than apples, oranges or figs. It means "the product of," like "fruit of the womb." Adam and Eve never prepared food before disobeying God. The couple only ate from the trees, not from anything that grew from the ground, such as grain. Now, after the disobedience, Adam would work to obtain bread, and since, it did not require work before, it had to be a product of a tree — the tree of life.

With this understanding, the text in John 6:5 and Romans 5 becomes more clear. Death came into the world by the first Adam eating outside of the will of God, from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (the Law); life comes into the world by eating according to the will of God, Christ's flesh and blood — the Eucharist, the fruit of the tree of life we call the Cross. Both are heavenly bread. The Jews prophesized that when the Messiah came he would elevate the meaning of the manna.

Eucharistic prefiguration continues throughout Genesis: the blood of Able "cries out" ... fulfilled in Hebrews 12:24 where Jesus's blood speaks; Noah planting a vineyard and grain after the flood and being permitted to eat clean animals ... animals originally only for sacrifice now allowed by eating to become bone of our bone and



flesh of our flesh; Abraham receiving from Melchizedek bread and wine; Jacob clothes himself in Esau's clothes (Incarnation) and receiving the inheritance which included grain for bread and plenty of wine, that Esau, the first son (Adam) sold; Joseph depending on Pharaoh's bread maker and cupbearer for deliverance. One died, one lived — death and resurrection in the Eucharist. Later Joseph reveals himself to his brothers *after* placing a cup into the grain. This led to their confession, reconciliation and the salvation of the world through grain for bread distribution.

Moses is a type (a prefiguration) of Christ. Both were born at a time when oppressors were killing Hebrew babies. Both had unusual first cribs. Both of them were raised by a man who was not their natural father. Both were God's appointed deliverers. Both were intercessors. Both offered their own lives to save the people. Both fasted 40 days and nights. Both gave up great riches to serve. Both, at their first appearance, were rejected by their own people. Both proclaimed commandments. Both provided food and drink. The list could go on and on.

There are many Eucharistic connections between the first Exodus in the Old Testament and the second Exodus brought on by Jesus.

Moses' first public miracle was changing water to wine, a forerunner of the greater miracle of changing wine to his own blood. Jesus' first public miracle was changing water to wine, a forerunner of the greater miracle of changing wine to his own blood. Moses was the first priest to represent *all* the people. In this new position, he proclaims the Torah to the people. Jesus, the High Priest, proclaims and also fulfilled the Torah during his three-year ministry — the same number of years it takes to read through the Torah reading cycle in synagogues. After proclaiming the Torah, Moses threw the blood of the sacrifice on the people saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made for you." The priest during the Mass lifts the consecrated host and wine and says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world ..."

Moses publicly consecrates Aaron, which began the priesthood (Kohanim succession) that continues to this day. All Kohens must trace their authority back to Aaron's consecration. Only these men and the other Levites were permitted to offer sacrifices and other priestly duties for the people. This is what Jesus did with the institution of the Twelve for apostolic succession. Only they and those they ordain have the authority to offer the Mass, announce forgiveness, etc.

The Levitical men, while serving as priests, though most were married, had to be celibate for the weeks they served as priests (five non-consecutive weeks per year; see I Samuel 21:1-5; Leviticus 15:18, 22:4). Priests ordained in the New Testament serve year-round. Peter, a married Jew, probably abstained (I Corinthians 7:5-7) before offering the sacrifice of the Mass. The lay priesthood does not have to be celibate because they are the receivers of the sacrifice,

not the ones who offer.

The manna in the wilderness is explained in John 6. The manna is related to the unleavened "Bread of the Presence," also translated the "Bread of the Faces" (plural), which was commanded to be on a table in the Holy Place in the Tabernacle (and the future Temple) perpetually. It foreshadowed Christ's presence as the bread, the visible yet invisible face of God (Exodus 25:23-30; Leviticus 24:5-7; Numbers 4:7; John 14:9).

The Passover feast is a monumental foreshadowing of the Eucharist. In this article, I will only touch on details normally not covered elsewhere. For instance, the way the blood of the lamb was strategically smeared on the doors: they poured the blood, not in a basin as

translated, but in a dugout hole in the threshold of the door. They dipped the hyssop into the blood, applied it to the two side posts and on the lintel (top) of each door. By observation, one could see the result of the smearing as an upright version of the Paleo Hebrew letter TAV. This letter means: the finish, the covenant, the mark, the sign and the signature (Exodus 12:13). The Hebrew letter looks like two crossed sticks — a cross, a cross with blood on it in the same location as the blood on Jesus' cross.

The Last Supper Jesus had with his disciple was probably not the Passover meal itself. The reason: the Passover lambs had not yet been sacrificed; Jesus had to die with the Passover lambs to fulfill the typology, which began with his birth (all Passover lambs during the second temple period had to be born in Bethlehem). The meal celebrated the evening before the Passover lambs were sacrificed was probably the Todah sacrificial meal (Leviticus 7:12-15, 22). "Todah" in Hebrew means "thanksgiving"; in Greek the word is "Eucharistia." It could be any time of the year as often as desired and was often eaten on the evenings surrounding the actual Passover night. The Todah meal was to give thanks for individual or family deliverance from peril or death. The Passover meal was a collective Todah meal designated for all Israel to eat together on one specific night, once a year, to celebrate a national deliverance.

The Todah meals had lamb, unleavened bread, cups of wine, prayers and hymns (the Hallel psalms are Todah psalms). The Todah sacrifice is considered the greatest of the animal sacrifices because it added suffering of one's own life (see Psalm 69:30). The Todah is a subcategory of the peace offerings (Leviticus 7:12-15), the only sacrifice non-priests are permitted to share in its sacrificial meal. The Todah offering was listed in the passage about the seventy-four being called to go up the mountain with Moses (Exodus 24:1-11). While there, they beheld God as they ate and drank. So too, on the night before the official Passover, the Twelve Apostles were called to go up with Jesus to an upper room. There they beheld God (Jesus) as they ate and drank. From that night on his body, blood, soul and divinity sacrifice would be called the Eucharist — Todah in Hebrew.

If the Lord's Supper was the Todah meal and not the yearly Passover meal, we have an explanation as to why the first Christians, who were Jews, immediately began celebrating this sacrificial meal weekly, and sometimes daily, instead of once a year. The ancient rabbis believed that after the Messiah comes all sacrifices except the Todah would cease. They were correct! Today, at the end of the Mass, the congregation exclaims, "Thanks be to God" — in Hebrew, "Todah laEl."

The foreshadowing of the Eucharist continues in the rest of the Old Testament. The following observations are only brief reflections and barely scratch the surface.

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THE EUCHARIST: THE SOURCE AND SUMMIT

The Truth is ‘Out There’

Deacon Timothy Britt

There is a show on T.V. called “The X Files.” It’s about two F.B.I. agents who investigate strange and unexplained events, like ghosts and UFOs. The show’s tagline is “the truth is out there.”

I always thought of that tagline as saying that there was

of life discourse” in John’s Gospel, many of his disciples said, “This saying is hard;” (aka, This teaching is “out there”) “Who can accept it?” and many of them returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.

Even today, many find our teaching on the Eucharist too out there. It is a stumbling block too confounding to get around or over. Two people can look at the same thing and



a rational explanation for all the mysteries that the agents were investigating. The answers the agents were searching for, basically the truth, would eventually be found because it was “out there” — somewhere.

Of course, there is another way of looking at that expression “out there.” It’s something that people say, sometimes, when they’re talking about something or someone who is unconventional, unorthodox or eccentric. It’s what people mean when they say that the truth is stranger than fiction or when they ask, “is this guy for real?”

As Catholics we cannot deny that the truth that we present to the world is “out there.” Jesus himself did not deny it, or at least he expected that some people would find the truth too hard to accept. Following what we call “the bread

see two entirely different things. Like an optical illusion, some of us might squint and strain and still not see what is said to be right before our eyes. The plate of what used to be bread and the cup of what used to be wine for some continue to appear to be nothing more than bread and wine. Like Pontius Pilate, we ask, “What is truth?” while truth himself stands before us.

Following Jesus’ introduction of himself as bread for the life of the world, as he watched so many followers walk away, Jesus asked the Twelve, “Do you want to leave too?” To which Simon Peter replied, “Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the holy one of God.”

It wasn’t that what he was telling them was any easier

of loaves and fishes miracle, which prefigured Jesus multiplying himself in the Eucharist.

All this is followed by Isaiah’s prophecies and his vision in chapter 7, the chapter where a coal of fire is taken from the fiery altar of God and is touched to Isaiah’s lips. The fiery coal is a prefiguration of the Host. This allusion is referred to in Church liturgies, especially in the Orthodox Liturgy of St. James where Communion is described as “receiving the fiery coal,” due to its cleansing of Isaiah to prepare him for his mission.

Another pre-Eucharistic episode is found in the vision of Ezekiel eating the scroll with the written Word of God on it — a scroll made edible (Ezek 2). This vision is experienced in the two parts of the Mass. In the first part, the Liturgy of the Word, we hear the written Word through the proclamations, we see the written Word before our eyes, and then we prepare to partake of the Word through the homily. In the second part, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we eat the Word of God — the Word made flesh, the Word made edible.

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for them to swallow than it was for those who left; it was simply that they believed in him. They trusted their friend. The truth was out there, but Jesus was close enough to touch. Jesus said it was true and so they came to recognize that Jesus himself was present — body, blood, soul and divinity — in the Blessed Sacrament. A hymn that I remember from my youth encourages us to “Look beyond the bread you eat; see your Savior and your Lord. Look beyond the cup you drink; see his love poured out as blood.”

The truth is out there, but Jesus is close enough to touch. Moreover, in the Blessed Sacrament we actually become a part of him. And so it happens that the truth that is somewhere out there is actually very close by. It has been placed on our hearts and written on our minds.

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What does the Eucharist mean to you? What people are saying around the Diocese.

Janet Schmidt, 2nd grade teacher at St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs

“I enjoy watching the children’s faces light up when we discuss the sacraments. They know deep in their hearts that this is a special time in their lives. When we discuss the parts of the Mass and especially the Consecration; they are listening like little sponges because they know it is an honor and privilege to receive Holy Communion. The children have a deep, inner yearning to learn more about the Eucharist.

When COVID -19 forced us to go to remote learning, we did not know when we would be able to celebrate First Holy Communion. One student who is dedicated to her faith said, ‘The Holy Eucharist is worth waiting for. It will be great whenever we get to have our First Communion.’ On the day of First Holy Communion, it was obvious that the Holy Spirit was hard at work! The First Communicants walked into church with a deep sense of maturity and confidence. This was their day, and although it was a different kind of First Communion Day — they had true joy and excitement behind their masks and a deep love for our Lord. It touched my heart more than any other First Communion Day in my teaching career.

I attend Mass whenever I can. It is my life-line. It is my connection to my God and my Catholic Faith. When my parish celebrated our first “in-person” Mass since COVID-19, I made sure I got to church early so that I would have a seat for Mass. I was yearning to receive Holy Communion. I masked up and social distanced, and was so excited to be at Mass. When I received Holy Communion, I cried — I literally cried out of pure joy! Finally, I was reunited with my dear friend and savior Jesus. After Mass, I just sat there and cried and thanked God that we were able to have Mass again — and receive Holy Communion. COVID-19 made me realize, more than ever, that I truly love receiving Holy Communion and attending Mass. I will never take that for granted again.”

In the Beginning

(Continued from page 9)

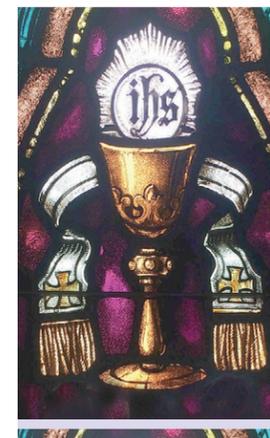
First, let’s consider the two great harvests of Israel — the spring harvest of grain and the fall harvest of mostly grapes and olives — bread, wine and oil. In Leviticus 23:12-13 God unites bread and wine, priests who anoint with oil and the sacrifice of the lamb.

Next, David is a type of Jesus starting with his birth in Bethlehem (House of Bread), and his being chosen by God for the dual role of king and priest — a priestly-king in the order of Melchizedek, the one who brought bread and wine to Abraham (Heb 7:17 quoting Psalm 110:4). There are also many Eucharistic images written by David in the psalms, such as Psalm 23, which contains the Eucharistic prophecy: “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” It is interesting to note that this psalm follows Psalm 22 — the passion psalm.

Now comes Elijah in the wilderness. (1 Kgs 19:6) While in the wilderness, Elijah was awakened by an angel and found prepared for him bread in the shape of a cake and a jar of water. The bread in the shape of a cake is like the host of the holy Eucharist. The jar of water foreshadows the water turned to wine at Cana.

After the prophet Elijah comes Elisha, who miraculously feeds a hundred men with a small amount of food, a type

Study Questions



How is Jesus present in the Eucharist and why is this so important?

What are some prefigurations of the Eucharist in the Old Testament?

What does it mean to say that Moses and David are a “type” of Christ?