

[Readings: Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Luke 9:11b-17]

This Sunday, fittingly, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus, the U.S. bishops will officially conclude the three-year-long celebration. The National Eucharistic Revival. Dioceses and parishes across the country held special Eucharistic processions. Masses, Holy Hours and festivals to celebrate what we know to be true: that Jesus Christ is present with us today and always -- Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity -- in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

A Catholic author, Flannery O'Connor, wrote this many decades ago: "I realize now that this is all I will ever be able to say about [the Eucharist], except that it is the center of existence for me."

How many of us can say with Flannery O'Connor that the Eucharist "is the center of existence for me?" Would our children, our fellow parishioners, our co-workers, our friends say that this is true of us?

In the end, the success of the National Eucharistic Revival depends not on the bishops, but on each one of us. The more deeply we encounter Christ in the Eucharist, the more our lives will reflect that encounter.

Saint Luke calls the Eucharist "the breaking of the bread." Saint Paul calls it "the supper of the Lord." Jesus says it is "the new covenant in His Body and Blood." Most of us use the words "Holy Communion" or "Most Blessed Sacrament." Pope Francis said that the Eucharist is not an award for good behavior, but medicine for the sick. None of us is worthy to have the Lord, "Come under our roof" as we say before receiving Holy Communion.

Our three Readings today speak of the progression of our understanding of the Most Holy Eucharist.

It is prefigured by Melchizedek. It is specified by St. Paul. It is expanded in today's Gospel. Jesus feeds us and then tells us to feed others. "Give us this day our daily bread" means we ask God not only to feed our bodies, but to feed our souls, and to be Christ for one another. To strive, to celebrate and to serve.

However you describe it, Eucharist is the centerpiece of the Catholic Christian experience. Especially as the Real Presence of Jesus. WHAT is the "Real Presence? That means that Jesus Christ is really and truly present in the Eucharist in His Body and Blood, Humanity and Divinity, under the form of bread and wine. Really!

Someone – an atheist – once said, "If you Catholics really believed in the Real Presence, you would come up and receive Communion on your hands and knees!" He has more of an understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist than most of us believers!

There are other special words that speak of what we do when we have Eucharistic Adoration. I would like to take the words common to Adoration and apply them to what happens AFTER we leave here, WHEN we encounter one another, HOW we become, how we bring and how WE can be the Real Presence to our world. The words are Exposition, Adoration and Benediction.

First, **Exposition**. We expose ourselves for who we really and truly are. Psychologists say that we are an emotional Holy Trinity: the public person we display to others; the private person we display to our more intimate family and friends, and the person we are afraid to show to anyone for fear of guilt, shame, or misunderstanding.

When we expose ourselves in our vulnerability, when we let others see us as God sees us and knows us, we can acknowledge that we are all

of one family and are all redeemed, saved, by the merciful peace and righteousness of God. Exposition.

Second, **Adoration**. Picture it. The Golden Girls. Dorothy and her mother are sitting on the couch watching TV. But Dorothy is gazing with love in her eyes at her mother. She just sits and stares. Finally, Sophia says, "What are you doing?" Dorothy says, "Nothing, Ma. Just looking at you and loving you." And Sophia says, "Well stop doing that. I've been wanting to pick my nose for the last five minutes!"

Parents, do you look lovingly at your children on a regular basis? Or do they see only judgement and criticism? Spouses, do you still look at each other with love in your eyes? That's adoration. What do you do during Eucharistic Adoration? Sit quietly and let the **Son** shine in your soul, as Sr. Pat often says. Have a silent conversation with the Lord. Pray your favorite prayers. Bring to mind all the blessings you have and give thanks. Or just sit in silence. Adoration.

Finally, **Benediction**. Blessing. We are blessed by the monstrance, which is a holder for the Blessed Sacrament in the form of the priest's host. The word monstrance means to display, to show. In our case, it means to make real what we celebrate within these walls.

Pope Francis says the simplest ways we do this is when we perform the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. We can and must do this in public, in our homes, in our communities, in our country.

In all of these ways, WE become a benediction, a blessing, to all those around us. That's one of the reasons why we have Eucharistic Processions in neighborhoods: to bring the Body of Christ into the world physically and sacramentally. Benediction.

My first Christmas away from home was in Vienna, Austria, when I was studying in Rome. We arrived at the local seminary an hour before all the stores closed on Christmas Eve. We rushed to buy food, essentials, and souvenirs.

Later on that night, we went to the Cathedral for Midnight Mass. In the two side choir lofts across from each other, a trumpet group played, “Lo, How a Rose e’re Blooming” and the voice choir on the other side responded. Still brings tears to my eyes whenever I hear that song.

Then we returned to the seminary to lay out our purchases on a small table. A little pink pig dessert cake for good luck. An elaborate red ribbon. A loaf of bread. A bottle of red wine. A candle. We lit the candle, joined hands and sang Silent Night. Then, we shared the bread and wine. So on that Christmas Eve, 1979, four American seminarians celebrated two very different “Holy Communions” in one night!

Exposition, Adoration, Benediction. Expose, adore, and bless. Try it. You’ll like it! AMEN!