

## The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ – Our Patronal Feast

The Feast of Corpus Christi, or the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, is a celebration of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. While Holy Thursday recalls Christ's institution of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, the Feast of Corpus Christi gives the faithful another opportunity to honor the Lord Jesus in the sacred Host.

Belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist began with its very inception and has continued in the Catholic Church to the present. The Bread of Life Discourse, the Last Supper, the road to Emmaus, and St. Paul's Epistles all reveal the truth that Jesus Christ is present in the sacred Host. The Apostolic Fathers – those men who knew the Apostles or who knew men who knew the Apostles – also attest to this reality (e.g., Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Cyril of Jerusalem).

In 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council, the Church formally adopted the term “transubstantiation” to describe how the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ while retaining the physical appearance of bread and wine. The Council of Trent, in 1551, reaffirmed this teaching in response to the errors of the Protestant Reformation. Today, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, for It contains “the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself” (CCC 1324).

Why is it, then, that only two-thirds of practicing Catholics (i.e., Catholics who fulfill the Precepts of the Church) believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist? People can probably point to many reasons, but they all hinge on one single notion; namely, faith. In Catholicism, faith is not just an emotion; it is an assent of the intellect to what God has revealed through his Church. Genuine faith requires accepting Catholic doctrine as a complete, unified whole. To reject even one tenet is to replace divine authority with personal preference.

Faith is also a gift, a supernatural virtue infused by God that allows us to believe in him and his revelation, even when it goes beyond – but does not contradict – human reasoning. Thus, if we find ourselves struggling to believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, or in any other tenet of Catholic doctrine, along with taking time to study the Catholic Faith, we can ask from God an increase in the gift of faith.

Like the father who pleaded to Jesus for help for his son with a demon, we, too, can plead to Jesus for help with our faith: “Jesus said to [the boy's father], ‘Everything is possible to one who has faith.’ Then the boy's father cried out, ‘I do believe, help my unbelief!’” (Mk 9:23-24). *Lord Jesus, we do believe, help our unbelief!*

Father Frei