

Recently, while listening to Catholic radio, I heard Patrick Madrid tell a thought provoking story. Patrick Madrid is a Catholic writer and speaker who also has radio and TV programs on EWTN. He told this story.

While speaking at a parish in California, a Mormon gentleman asked to speak with him. He agreed to meet with him after the formal talk was over. As he left the Sanctuary he turned to genuflect in front of the Tabernacle. The man later asked him, *"What is the curtsey thing you just did up there? I've seen Catholics do that before, what does that mean?"*. Mr. Madrid took this opportunity to explain to him about the Real Presence and how we show reverence to Jesus who is present in the Blessed Sacrament, that we believe that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist reserved in the Tabernacle. The gentleman replied that this explanation did not seem to conform with his experience with Catholics. He did not believe that most Catholics really believed that. He explained that he had been to several Catholic weddings and funerals and observed that as people went forward for communion, some were chewing gum, others were waving to other people in the church and many just were not focused on what they are doing. He asked, *"If Catholics really believe the Eucharist is God, why aren't they more reverent?"* Then he said something that stuck with Mr. Madrid; *"If I believed what you say you believe, I would be flat on my face before the Eucharist. If that's really God, that's how I would respond."*

Hopefully this man's observations are not typical of how most Catholics behave, but if you are like me, there are times when I forget, times when I do not respond in a way that shows the respect due to God, either through my thoughts or actions. I wonder why this happens, is it complacency, familiarity or lack of faith? It is the thought that it might be due to lack of faith that concerns me the most. Unfortunately, doubts are an inescapable part of being human. When we experience them we sometimes seek hard evidence to dispel those doubts. A nice miracle usually helps.

I think that is why there has always been great interest in Eucharistic Miracles, in part, because we all would like to have concrete proof that what we believe about the Eucharist is true, proof that would verify our faith.

There are many recorded Eucharistic Miracles throughout the history of our Church. One such miracle happened in 1263 when a priest from Prague, who was struggling with his own doubts, went on a pilgrimage to Rome. He was a pious priest but found it difficult to believe that Christ was actually present in the consecrated Host. Near the end of his journey, he stopped at a church about 70 miles north of Rome to spend the night. The next morning he celebrated Mass there and just as he recited the words, "*This is my body. Do this in remembrance of me*", blood started to seep from the consecrated Host and trickle over his hands and down onto the corporal on the altar. Needless to say his doubts vanished. This is the Eucharistic Miracle at Bolsena-Orvieto in Italy, and it prompted Pope Urban IV to institute the feast of Corpus Christi, which we are celebrating today. The linen corporal bearing the spots of blood is still reverently enshrined and exhibited in the Cathedral of Orvieto.

Dramatic miracles like this certainly have impact, and we would love to experience one right here at IHM. But the fact is, we do experience a Eucharistic Miracle right here at IHM. It happens at each Mass we celebrate. It is the miraculous change of the bread and wine into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. This may not appear as dramatic, but it is actually a greater miracle than the one at Bolsena-Orvieto.

If you have ever been in the sacristy, you may have noticed a small plaque there that displays a quotation from St. Augustine. It says, "*Be ever mindful of the undeserved honor given you, O Priest, in whose hands, as in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, the Son of God becomes incarnate.*" That helps to put into perspective what happens right here on this altar in our presence. Jesus is incarnate in the bread and wine we receive.

The Church gives us the Feast of Corpus Christi to help us remember why we believe this. All the Scriptures we read today reveal the significance of the bread and wine we have here at Mass.

In our first reading and the psalm we hear about this mysterious priest, Melchizedek, who has no origin and no end. His name means King of righteousness. He is the King of Salem. Salem has the same root as the

Hebrew word Shalom (peace), so he is the King of peace. He is a priest of God Most High, not of the line of Aaron, and he offers bread and wine in thanksgiving to God. As Christians, we see this as prefiguring the Eucharist, our thanksgiving to God, and prefiguring Jesus, who is both High Priest and King of peace. Jesus, like Melchizedek, receives his priesthood directly from God not by inheritance from the line of Aaron the Levite. Jesus, like Melchizedek, bestows God's blessings. These passages are seen as an announcement of the divinity of the Messiah King and his everlasting priesthood. *He is a priest forever in the line of Melchizedek.*

In the second reading St. Paul describes Jesus' ultimate action as High Priest, when he offers bread and wine at the last supper. But there is something different from Melchizedek's offering. Jesus declares the bread to be his Body and the wine to be his Blood. We know how this plays out, Jesus gives himself as the sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, he is the lamb of God, the Passover lamb. But, as with the Israelites in Egypt, the Passover sacrifice must be eaten by the people. Jesus had already told his disciples that they must eat his Body and drink his Blood. This is recorded in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John, and remembered in our Gospel Acclamation today. Now he gives them a way to do that, by changing the bread and wine into his Body and Blood. We also recognize that when Jesus commanded "*do this in remembrance of me*" he was instituting the priesthood, that is, the sacrament of Holy Orders. That way, through the action of our priest today, we too can eat Jesus' Body and drink his Blood as he commanded.

The Gospel further develops our understanding of the meal in which we partake at each Mass. This episode also prefigures the Eucharist. Jesus tells his disciples to feed the people. But they cannot do it with their own resources, they cannot do it without his help. But with his help they are able to feed a multitude of people.

So it is with us here today. Father cannot give us spiritual food on his own. But with Jesus' help he can feed us all with the food from Jesus' once and for all sacrifice, through the miraculous transformation our bread and wine into Jesus' Body and Blood. There is a super abundance of grace

poured out at Masses all over the world each day. It is not just 5000 who are fed, but billions of faithful are fed each week. And we are privileged to experience this Eucharistic Miracle each week, right here in our presence.

Today we will have a Eucharistic procession, in which we will take our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament out into the streets of Los Alamos. It is our way of proclaiming that we truly believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the bread we carry, for all to see.

Here at IHM we also have the blessing of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration, where we can go and spend some personal time in the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Any time we want, we can pray, one-on-one, face-to-face with our Lord and our God. It is another way we proclaim our belief in our Eucharistic Miracle.

Next weekend we are having an Adoration sign-up, so that more of us can have the opportunity to spend that personal time in the presence of this Miracle each week. I encourage you to prayerfully consider committing an hour a week to experience this great blessing.

I'd like to conclude with an English translation of the first verse of an Adoration song we usually sing in Latin, Tantum Ergo Sacramentum. Please listen to this beautiful prayer.

Come adore this wondrous presence,  
Bow to Christ the source of grace.  
Here is kept the ancient promise  
of God's earthly dwelling place.  
Sight is blind before God's glory,  
Faith alone may see his face.

May we always show the reverence due to the God of creation, present among us in the Eucharist.