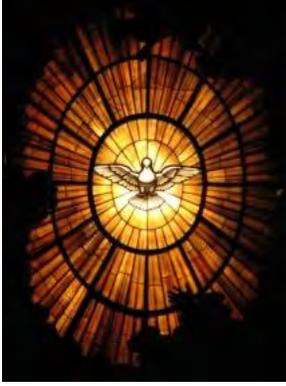


RECOGNIZING CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST



I visited my father last week. He lives in Michigan. On the morning I was leaving to return home we sat outside enjoying the rare spring day. As we were talking, Dad asked me what the weather was like in Texas (he thought I lived in Texas). I said, "Well, I live in Oregon." He paused and said, "Matt Cato lives in Portland, Oregon; do you know him?"

My father no longer recognized me. Though he didn't know me, he enjoyed talking with me. He liked pouring me my morning coffee. He made sure that we ate lunch together.

Like my father, the two disciples in today's Gospel reading did not recognize Jesus until at table, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he

vanished from their sight.

At least they eventually recognized Jesus. When do we recognize Jesus? Are we like the disciples and fail to recognize Jesus except in the breaking of the bread? Are we like the disciples and, once recognizing Jesus in the Eucharist, can't wait to share this news?

At the mass that opened 40 Days for Life, Archbishop Sample explained that the Eucharist is the Source and the Summit of our Faith.

The central mystery of our Christian Faith is the Paschal Mystery, the death, resurrection and glorious ascension of our Lord. It is the mystery celebrated in the Eucharist and once when we believe this, we have reached the Summit.

Pope John Paul II makes it clear that the Eucharist is the Source of our Faith: the Eucharist "increases, rather than lessens, our sense of responsibility for the world today."

As Pope Benedict XVI explained, the Eucharist "demands that we denounce inhumane situations" such as poverty, inequality, and violence.

As Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedict wrote that, "whoever recognizes the Lord in the [Eucharist] recognizes him in the suffering and the needy; they are among those to whom the world's judge will say: 'I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me'" (Mt 25:35).

We honestly recognize Jesus when we acknowledge our responsibility to the world, denounce inhumane situations, and give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty. Do you recognize Jesus in the world or is your vision clouded except when celebrating the Eucharist?

Our work of justice and charity is fueled by the Eucharist and is inseparable from the Eucharist. When we fully understand this we are compelled to profess Jesus Christ while we engage in our work. When we fully appreciate this we willingly live our Eucharistic commitment outside of mass. "Grant that we may never shirk the Eucharistic table and the life of service it implies."

My father did not recognize me but he was drawn to me in the intimacy of the meal. The disciples' hearts were burning while Jesus opened the Scriptures to them, but they failed to recognize him until the intimacy of their meal.

When we celebrate the Eucharist – this intimate meal – are we drawn to Christ? Do we recognize him, especially in our service to others?

(Readings for Third Sunday of Easter)



Office of Life, Justice, and Peace