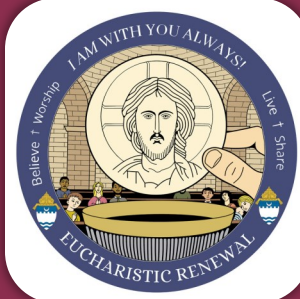


Encountering the Eucharist

Believe ✦ Worship ✦ Live ✦ Share



During the season of Advent, the color of the vestments and paraments change from green to a dark “royal” purple to symbolize preparation, penitence and royalty to welcome the new King—Christ the Lord. Additionally, we light candles during the four weeks of Advent traditionally representing faith, hope, joy, and love. In the northern hemisphere, the nights grow longer and longer until we finally reach the winter solstice—the longest and darkest night of the year. We light the candles of the advent wreath to remind us that, in ages past, the world was in darkness because Christ, the light of the world, had not yet been revealed. Now, as we light each candle, we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ at the close of this age.

What We Believe...

The Incarnation Reveals the Eucharist

At this time in her liturgy, Holy Mother Church is asking us to prepare ourselves for the Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ—or Christmas. The Church does this by means of the season of Advent. The word is Latin from *adventus* and conveys the sense of a coming or an approach or an arrival. We are thus being reminded during this season of a threefold coming: 1) the Lord’s coming at the end of the age, 2) the Lord’s coming at Christmas, and 3) the Lord’s coming to us in Word and Sacrament. All three of these modes have one unifying theme: the Incarnation. When preparing ourselves for Christmas, our imagination usually focuses on the story of the nativity and the drama of that first Christmas night when Mary and Joseph made their way to the stable. We ponder over the *birth* of a baby named Jesus and the adoration of the shepherds and the mysterious visit of the Magi. Although these images convey the *story* of Christmas, they do not express the *significance* of Christmas. As miraculous as the events surrounding the birth of Jesus were, ultimately babies are born everyday. However, the significance of Christmas can be found in the Incarnation. To truly understand the dogma of the Incarnation, first one must recognize that there exists a plurality of persons within the Godhead who share the same *ousia* or divine essence. In other words, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are consubstantial in that they all take part of the same divine substance. The Second Person of the Trinity, i.e. the divine *Logos* (the Word or the pre-incarnate Christ) being God, always existed and, in the words of one of the early Fathers of the Church, Origen, “there was never a time when He was not.” Therefore, when the Blessed Virgin Mary consented to the Father’s plan, announced by the angel saying, “be it done unto me according to your word,” the Second Person of the Trinity came and took to Himself a human nature remaining forever undiminished in His Deity and truly human united in the one person (Jesus) forever. Said differently, When Jesus Christ came into the world, a Person came not just a nature. The Second Person of the Trinity took on an *additional nature*, a human nature—He did not simply dwell in a human person. The result of the union of the two natures is a theanthropic person or a God-Man. These two natures, human and divine, are unchangeably, inseparably, unconfusedly united together in something called the *hypostatic union*. The Greek word *hypostases* literally means “to stand underneath” and conveys the idea of an underlying substance that supports some fundamental reality. Therefore in Christ the underlying substances of both divinity and humanity support the fundamental reality of a person called Jesus. To summarize, at the incarnation, Jesus added to His eternal God nature (having no beginning or end), a second everlasting human nature (having a beginning but no end). These two natures were perfectly united. As we read in the prophecy of Isaiah during this Advent: “Therefore, the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel—God with us” (7:14). So, how does the Incarnation relate to the Eucharist? In the Gospel of John we read: “The Jews murmured about Jesus because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven,” and they said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven?’” (Jn. 6:41-42). The Jews were questioning that Jesus said that He

continued on the back



“I come, O Lord, unto Thy sanctuary to see the life and food of my soul. As I hope in Thee, O Lord, inspire me with that confidence which brings me to Thy holy mountain. Permit me, Divine Jesus, to come closer to Thee, that my whole soul may do homage to the greatness of Thy majesty that my heart...may acknowledge thine infinite love.”

-from the writings of
St. Clare of Assisi

“The Incarnation Reveals the Eucharist” continued from the front...

‘came down from Heaven’. Think about what came down from heaven means. Neither you nor I can say that we came down from heaven. Each one of us knows that we are creatures, we are created by God through our biological parents, and that from the beginning we are human, we have a human nature. But Jesus did come down from Heaven. He is not a created human being like you or I, but from the beginning Jesus is the un-created divine Son of God. For us to believe that Jesus is really, truly, and substantially present in the Eucharist, we must determine if we really believe God heard the cries of his people, and out of love and desire for us, sent Jesus to share in our humanity? Do we really believe that the Second Person of the Trinity came down to earth to save us so that we can come to know and love the Father? Do we really believe that Jesus was sent by the Father for the forgiveness of our sins so that we can share fully in God’s divine life and live with Him eternally in Heaven? If so, then why would it be so difficult to believe that Jesus would be able to “stand under” the appearances of bread and wine? If we think about who Jesus is— about all the miracles He did, the people He healed, the casting out demons, the raising from the dead—the Son of God. If we believe that Jesus loves us, and every person, so much that He would do all that for us then, if we really believe in who He is, then the more important question isn’t *how* the Eucharist is what it is, but *why*? Why wouldn’t Jesus—if we *really* believe that He is the God-man—then why wouldn’t He want to give Himself to us in this most special and intimate way? So, in faith, we have to admit, not only that God could do what He said, but that also, because of who He is, God would want to! Thus, our belief in the Incarnation, that the Son of God came down from Heaven to share in our humanity is intrinsically tied to our belief in the Eucharist.

Life in the Eucharist: St Clare of Assisi

The life of St. Clare not only reveals to us her incredible devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and her deep trust in the Lord’s protection, but it also demonstrates the power of the Holy Eucharist. Though she was feeble and sick, St. Clare turned away an army and prevented an attack on the monastery in which she lived with her sisters by holding high the

monstrance. As the Saracens were approaching the convent, Saint Clare took the monstrance, and going to the window, faced the direction from which the invaders were coming. She raised the Blessed Sacrament, and upon this benediction, the Saracens fled the town and failed to return. Thus, the town of Assisi was spared from the

attack. St. Clare’s actions showed her Faith in the Real Presence and of her confident trust in God: that Jesus is truly present in the consecrated host and, as God will be our help and protection in time of trouble.



Adoro te Devote: The Mingling of Water & Wine

If you’ve paid close attention at Mass, you might have noticed a curious little ritual. During the Offertory, after the priest prepares the wine, he adds a few little drops of water to the chalice. During the time of Jesus, the wine used was quite strong and needed to be diluted by water since it was the beverage that everyone drank. Remember there wasn’t the water purification systems that we have now, so people, for the most part, could only drink water that was mixed with wine as a disinfectant. This practice continued in the early Church out of necessity. However, a theological meaning was added to this gesture. St. Cyprian of Carthage (A.D. 250) writes in his epistle about the significance of mixing the water and wine: “Because Christ bore us all, in that He bore our sins, we see that by the water, people are signified, while in the wine, indeed, the blood of Christ is shown. And when the water is mixed with the wine in the cup, the people are made one with Christ, and the multitude of believers is coupled and joined to Him in whom it believes” (W.A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 1, 232). The water can also represent Jesus’ humanity while the wine stands for His divinity united together in the hypostatic union.

