

Chapter 9: Jesus Is Present with Us Now



Introduction

Jesus loves us so much that he wants to be with us at all times. He gave us ways to stay close to him after he ascended into Heaven to be with his Father. He is with us through other people who love us and care for us. He is with us through God's Word in the Bible. He is with us through the Seven Sacraments.

Jesus is even physically with us through the Eucharist. The bread and wine we offer at Mass are turned into his Body and Blood, with his soul and divinity. When we receive the Eucharist, we are receiving all of Jesus into our bodies, minds, and hearts!

Scripture Story: Two Disciples Meet the Risen Jesus

After Jesus was raised from the dead, he appeared many times to his followers, who are also called disciples. The Gospel of Luke describes one time

when Jesus appeared to two of his disciples who were walking home. At first they did not know it was Jesus. Then this happened:

As they came near the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther; but they held him back, saying, "Stay with us; the day is almost over and it is getting dark." So he went in to stay with them. He sat down to eat with them, took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, "Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:28-32)

The two disciples were generous. They invited this stranger to stay overnight at their home. Then something amazing happened during dinner. The stranger said a prayer and passed them the bread. As soon as he did this, the two disciples recognized that he was Jesus!

This story reminds us that Jesus is truly risen from the dead. He lives now forever in his glorious resurrected body! And even though he ascended into Heaven, he is still with us and active in our lives in many ways. For example, Jesus is with us in other baptized people and in the priests and bishops who celebrate the sacraments. He is with us through his Word in the Bible and through the Seven Sacraments. He is with us in a very special way in the Eucharist. Through his presence to us in these and other ways, Jesus continues to build the **Kingdom of God** and he helps us to grow in holiness.

God's Treasure of the Eucharist

Just like the story of the two disciples who broke bread and then recognized that Jesus was there with them, we also break bread at Mass and meet the Risen Jesus. The bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit and the words and actions of the priest.

After the Eucharistic Prayer, it is time for us to receive Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Jesus. Holy Communion is another name we use for the Body and Blood of Christ. *Communion* means "unity" or "oneness," and receiving the Eucharist strengthens our unity with Jesus and with the Church.

We receive the Eucharist during a part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist called the Communion Rite. The Communion Rite begins with the Lord's Prayer, which we pray in unity with the Church. We then offer one another a sign of peace, which is also a sign of our unity. While the priest breaks the bread, we say a prayer called "The Lamb of God."

The priest then invites us to come forward to receive Holy Communion by saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." The people respond, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed" (*Roman Missal*, page 669).

Receiving Holy Communion

This is how we come forward to receive Communion:

- We make a short bow from the waist as we approach the priest or minister who is distributing the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ.
- We can receive the Host, which is another name for the consecrated bread, in our hands (with the left hand placed palm up on top of the right hand) or on our tongue.
- The minister of Holy Communion will say, "The Body of Christ," to which we respond, "Amen" (*Roman Missal*, page 669). We then receive the Host in our palm or on our tongue. If we take Holy Communion in our hands, we take the Host from our palm with the right hand. We then consume the Host.
- When we receive from the cup, we bow again. The minister will say, "The Blood of Christ," to which we respond, "Amen," and take a small sip from the cup. (*Roman Missal*, page 669).

After we have received the Eucharist and returned to our seat, we stand and sing, or kneel and sing, and then pray silently.

Things to Remember

- The Risen Jesus is with us everywhere. For example, he is present and active through other people, his Word in the Bible, the sacraments, the priests and bishops celebrating the sacraments, and especially in the Eucharist.
- Holy Communion is another name for the Eucharist.
- The Communion Rite begins with the Lord's Prayer, includes the sign of peace, and is the part of Mass where we receive Holy Communion.
- We respond, "Amen," after the minister of Communion says, "The Body of Christ" and "The Blood of Christ" (*Roman Missal*, page 669). We consume the Host and take a small sip from the cup.