

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
December 31, 2023
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #1

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” (John 6:53-57; King James Bible)

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have deemed 2024 as a year dedicated to fostering and promoting a greater understanding and love of the Eucharist. Their plan culminates with a Eucharistic Congress to be held in Indianapolis later in the year. Many parishes throughout our nation will offer varied programs and teachings to accommodate the bishops’ request. For our part, we will join in the much-needed work through a year-long catechetical study of the Eucharist, the Source and Summit of our Catholic Faith. It is my hope that our efforts, which begin in these last hours of 2023, will bless our parishes and our families throughout the new year, 2024.

I begin with two fundamental questions concerning our belief in the Eucharist. These questions, however, are not directed toward any theological or doctrinal issue concerning the Catholic Church’s teachings upon the Eucharist. Rather, it is my observation that our first questions should begin within the framework of a basic understanding or knowledge of Jesus. Therefore, I ask each one present: Do you believe Jesus IS the Son of God? Furthermore, do you believe the words spoken by Him, as attested to by our Sacred Scriptures, are the divine utterances of God?

I readily admit my questions may seem a bit childish. Some may even feel they are too basic for our generation of Catholics. However, if surveys and their results are to be believed, our generation has become one of the most illiterate and uncatechized groups of Catholics in quite some time. Each time we hear of a Catholic, one who has left to join another religious denomination, repeat the statement “I did not get anything out of the Mass,” then we know we have failed to convey to them the significance of what takes place upon our altars.

Two weeks ago, I spoke of the mission of Jesus as our Reconciler and Divine Savior. I referred to the Gospel of Saint Matthew describing how Saint Joseph is told in a dream: “*He will save His people from their sins.*” (Matthew 1:21). For you and I to understand, either Jesus or His Mission, we must begin by going back to the beginning. We must start with a decision made beside a tree in the first Garden and follow the path of salvation history which leads to another decision made upon a tree in another garden. As we journey this path together, I only ask for your open minds, hearts and many prayers. May our efforts today bear fruit and lead all present toward a deeper love of the Eucharist and eternal life.