

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

The Eucharist – Source and Summit of Our Lives

It is appropriate that we should complete our discussion of the Sacraments with an exploration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. According to *Lumen Gentium (LG)*, Vatican II's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, "[The Eucharist] is the source and summit of the Christian life." [LG 11]. It is from the Eucharist that all Christian activity finds its meaning and it is toward the Eucharist that all Christians should strive.

It was Christ Himself who not only established the Eucharist but also made it the "source and summit of the Christian life" by linking this Sacrament to His own saving act of His Passion, Death and Resurrection. "[Jesus] said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it [again] until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God.'... Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which will be given for you; **do this in memory of me.**' And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.'" [LK 22:15-16, 19-20, emphasis added] From that moment forward, the Church has celebrated the Eucharist "in memory" of our Lord and Savior and the life that he has given **for** us and **to** us. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, "At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to

entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet 'in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.'" [CCC 1323]

Jesus' command to "Do this in memory of me" reminds us that Christ is present in the Eucharist in a special way. While it is true that Christ is present in many ways in this world – in His Word, His people, His Creation, His ministers, and especially through the grace of the Sacraments (as we have discussed in previous columns) – His presence in the Eucharist is distinct and unique. According to the *Catechism*, "In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist 'the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.' 'This presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.'" [CCC 1374] Therefore, the specific grace of this Sacrament is the reception of the **fullness** of Christ's presence.

I mentioned at the beginning of this column that it was appropriate that we should end our discussion of the Sacraments with the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Ending our discussion of the Sacraments with the Eucharist also transitions well into our extended discussion of the Mass, which begins next week.

