

## Eucharistic Revival

- Good evening, brothers! Tonight I am going to share some thoughts with you about the National Eucharistic Revival. It is a 3-year, multi-faceted effort to bring forth the highest level of understanding and appreciation for the sacredness of the Eucharist among Catholics.
- It is a national campaign only within the United States that has been developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). This is a response to a 2019 Pew Research survey asserting that over two-thirds of the U.S. population who label themselves “Catholic” do not believe Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist.
- I am not presenting this topic tonight because I have concerns that anyone in this room may have doubts that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. I am presenting this topic because we, as Knights of Columbus, have a responsibility for leading all other Catholics to a fullness of that understanding, even if these survey results are skewed.
- I have no doubts that each of us has fully accepted in faith that Jesus is present in the Eucharist, because he told us so and we are obedient to his word. It is this deep faith in Jesus that we are called to share with others. Sometimes things are not what they appear to be, and it takes a deep faith to know the truth despite what appearances may convey.
- It is my hope that if we are informed enough to be conversant on details of the Revival, we can better lead others to see the sacredness and importance of the Eucharist in our worship of Jesus. When others see our reverence for the Eucharist, they also may begin to more fully understand and conform their reception of the Eucharist in the most reverent manner they can manage.
- I believe it is this interior posture of reverence and humbleness before God that opens wider our minds and hearts to experience his love in a personal way. It is this flow of God’s love through each one of us that will enable positive changes in our culture.
- You would think that making cultural change of this magnitude would require a large scale, detailed plan. The Air Force engineer in me would have created a well mapped out campaign plan with a stream of goals, objectives and activities to reach this vision.
- We should be thankful that I am not in charge. This approach would have generated a lot of churn for very little progress in changing the culture.
- Instead the USCCB mapped out a grass-roots, celebratory approach that depends heavily on promptings by the Holy Spirit to lead people at all levels of the Church in planning Revival activities.
- The first year of the Revival was from June 2022 to June 2023, and it was focused at the diocesan level. The bishops, priests and diocesan staff prayerfully responded to God’s invitation to consider Eucharistic events and outreach efforts. However, according to the National Eucharistic Revival website, the heart of the first year efforts was to pray and fast while asking Jesus to revive his Church.

- The second year from June 2023 to July 2024 focuses on parish level revival efforts. For us, it has encompassed a continuation of things already underway in our parish, but with a heightened awareness of the sacredness of the Eucharist.
- Certainly Father Kelly has been more instructive this year during some homilies about the proper and most reverent approach for receiving communion. We also continue to revere and adore Christ during our first Friday Adoration opportunities.
- For the past two years in RCIA, we have spent more time teaching about the Eucharist. We have increased classes from one to three sessions covering the scriptural, ceremonial, and spiritual aspect of our Eucharistic traditions.
- The Women's Bible Study group is nearing completion of a study titled "Jesus and the Eucharist" which was developed by the Augustine Institute and is available on Formed.org. Additionally, some of the parents of the middle and high school youth have also gone through this educational program with our youth ministry director, Eileen Eley.
- In fact, many of our high school youth are planning to attend the Tenth National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis this summer. This Congress, to be held 17-21 July, is the culminating event for this second year of Revival activities.
- Another major event of this second year of the Revival is the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage. It will be one of the largest Eucharistic pilgrimages in history encompassing four simultaneous Eucharistic processions over four different routes throughout the U.S. totaling 6,500 miles.
- Each of the four different processions will begin on May 17<sup>th</sup> and terminate in Indianapolis on July 16<sup>th</sup> for the start of the National Eucharistic Congress. There are many different events scheduled in each of the participating parishes along the pilgrimage routes.
- If you are interested in learning more and maybe participating in some of these events, I recommend you check out their website: [www.eucharisticrevival.org](http://www.eucharisticrevival.org). My wife Nancy and I are planning to participate in some of the pilgrimage events in my home town of Bay St. Louis as the procession passes through the Mississippi Gulf Coast.
- While the first year Revival efforts were focused at the diocesan level and the second year at the parish level, the third year falls to individual Catholics. In the third year, the Holy Spirit has been invited to move us as individuals into a deepening Eucharistic relationship with Jesus.
- The Church's hoped for outcome is that each of us will be given a mission to witness our personal Eucharistic relationship to others. That mission could be to strengthen practicing Catholics who are weak in their faith. Or maybe to reach out to lapsed Catholics inviting them back to Mass.
- Or we may be called to show our non-Catholic brothers and sisters that the Catholic Church offers the only opportunity to experience the fullness of the Christian faith.

- There is one thing that is certain, though. We will not be able to give to someone else the fullest understanding of the Eucharist if we don't have it to give. During this third year of the Revival, we should open ourselves up to an even deeper friendship with Jesus. We should pursue prayerful encounters with him in the Eucharist.
- I began desiring a deeper friendship with Jesus a few years ago as I began feeling a recurring dryness to my prayer life. I shared this with my spiritual director as she directed me on a silent retreat a year ago. She gave me an article from a book by Louis Savary to read and pray with. The article is titled "Seeing You in the Eucharist."
- The author suggests to the reader that when praying before the Eucharist, you should imagine yourself in the consecrated host looking back at you in the pew. He says that seeing yourself in the host is a good practice to remind you that you are always being held safely in the Body of Christ.
- I read through the entire article quickly the first time. My initial thought was "how could this be?" It seemed on the surface to be an irreverent thought.
- I wasn't sure if I liked this idea, but I decided to keep an open mind and ponder this idea a little longer and a little deeper. After all, the author is only suggesting we use our imagination to picture ourselves in the host.
- He doesn't say we should believe we are holy enough to share in Jesus' divinity in this life. I equated this idea to be something like the imaginative contemplation we sometimes use during Lectio Divina prayer.
- But after reading the article again more carefully, I came back to my initial feeling that this seemed somewhat irreverent and impossible for me to fathom. While we are part of the Body of Christ, we are not part of his divinity in this life.
- I decided to ask Jesus directly about this in prayer. I asked whether he was okay with this approach to prayer with the Eucharist. I waited for a reply, but never felt a "yes" or "no" response. Instead, the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary came to mind.
- I thought about the pain he endured for us as he was being scourged and the emotional injury that it had on his mother. There have been several times when I prayed the sorrowful mysteries that I wanted to step in front of those whips to spare him a few of those blows.
- There have been times when I wanted to come to his side when he was being mocked and beaten to remind him that he is loved and he is not alone.
- I then thought about all the times we offer up our sufferings to Jesus even though it pales in comparison to his suffering. I hope that maybe in some way this lessens the magnitude of his suffering for the world, or gives him the means to help some other poor soul who would otherwise not be open to receiving his aid.
- My next thought was that if we can offer to join our minor suffering with Christ's suffering, then could we not also join our meager goodness with his infinite and perfect goodness?

- Suddenly this idea of seeing myself in the consecrated host seemed to have an appeal for me. After all, are we not supposed to offer ourselves personally as gift to God when we also offer as a community the bread and wine to be consecrated at Mass? Could some goodness of ourselves offered as a gift to God be consecrated along with the bread and wine?
- Only God knows this with certainty. For the rest of us, it is a matter of faith if we want to believe it. Maybe offering the best of ourselves to God at Mass is a new facet of our faith that we need to consider. Could it be that offering ourselves in gift to the Eucharist is not as limited as it may appear to be?
- Maybe God does leave a little room in the host for our meager goodness just as he leaves a little room for us to bring our suffering into his perfect Passion. Maybe these little opportunities to join our suffering with his Passion and our goodness in the Eucharist are the first invitations to be subjoined with him in an eternal and divine life after we die.
- I am offering these ideas as food for thought that we can bring to prayer with him during this third year of the Eucharistic Revival. It is good that we can be comfortable in our relationship with Jesus to have these bizarre conversations with him while adoring him in the Eucharist.
- It is unfortunate that many Catholics and non-Catholic believers do not know this to be a possibility. The National Eucharistic Revival is an invitation to help those people overcome their limitation.
- All of us in this room are very comfortable with accepting Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist. Maybe, brothers, what we should ponder during this Eucharistic Revival is whether we are really present in the Eucharist. What are we offering of ourselves to God?

Peace Be With You,

Marc Barrett