

In the Eucharist, you are given the awesome opportunity to meet Jesus Christ. If a person walks into a Catholic Church, he or she sees that Jesus is present in the tabernacle (the lit candle shows us that he is there). You can be with Christ alone. For as long as you want. Maybe he won't answer all of your questions in one meeting, but over time he sheds much light into your life. He holds the meaning of your life. He has created you and given you all of your gifts. He has a plan for you. If you regularly spend time praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, he will reveal his plan to you.

The Jews were right about two things with regard to the Eucharist (Bread of life discourse, John 6). They were right to take Jesus literally and that this is a hard teaching. It takes faith to believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist even though it seems like foolishness. For those who believe, it is like finding a great treasure (see Mt 13:44). The sweet taste of this treasure is the taste of heaven on earth: "*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life*" (Jn 6:54).

C.o.o.l.

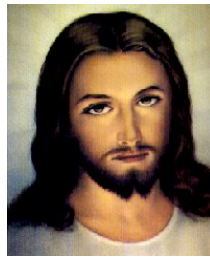
Think of or even make a list of 10 people, places or things that are most important to you. Family members, boyfriend/girlfriend, friends, the beach, sentimental items, other valuable possessions, money, clothes, DVDs, and car might top your list. Now, take a few minutes (or longer), and rank these items 1-10 in importance to you (1 is most important).

Why are these things most important to you? What do you find or receive in each one? Most likely, you come in contact with them regularly, maybe even daily. If it is a person, what is it about her that you find attractive? What are you looking for from her? How often do you talk with or see him? What do you experience in his presence? If it is a thing, why do you use it? What does it give you? How often do you use it? If it is a place, why is it so special? The people or things that are most important to us say a lot about who we are.

Ultimately, there is one thing we are all looking for: happiness. We want to be truly happy each day and have chosen these people or things to get us there. Some of them help us to find happiness, and some of them don't. There are some things in our lives that are not good for us, but we still go to them regularly. For example, an alcoholic might have listed bourbon as one of his 10 things because it takes him away from his problems. While it may bring him temporary pleasure, it doesn't bring him true happiness.

Now, if he didn't make your top ten list, please add God as a late entry. Specifically, write "the Eucharist." Take a moment and compare Jesus Christ to all of the items on your list. *Jesus died for you.* The Eucharist is a living memorial of what Jesus did for you 2000 years ago on the Cross, and what he does for you every day. He gives you his life. He gives you love. He gives you true happiness. No other person, place, or thing can give you what the Eucharist gives you.

The Eucharist is c.o.o.l. (center of our lives). It is truly the flesh and blood of him who created us and saved us. He is as alive in the Eucharist as you and I are alive. He wants to be number one on your list. He is always there for you. He made you. He knows everything about you. Everything you're going through. Every pain, struggle, joy, stress, disappointment, fear, success, hope, and love you're experiencing. He wants to experience them with you. He wants you to experience them with him. He wants to be a very real part of your life. He is waiting for you in the Eucharist.



The Eucharist:



C.o.o.l.

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Radical

You've seen the crowds grow larger by the day, following one man. You've seen him heal the blind, the deaf, and the mute. You've seen him cure the sick. You've heard his great teachings. You've seen him walk on water. All of the signs are there: Jesus of Nazareth is the one to follow. You've been sure for weeks now. Your heart is pumping. You're talking about him with everyone. You have been reading the Scriptures more frequently, reviewing what Isaiah and the other prophets wrote about the Messiah.

You haven't talked with Jesus yet, but you feel a connection there. The words he uses, the way he speaks, the manner in which he conducts himself. He has such a powerful way about him. But you haven't been able to put your finger on it just yet. You just know you want to be near him and learn from him. He is different, a man set apart from the rest. This man has stirred your heart and mind like no other person has ever done.

And, now, he is introducing a brand new teaching. *"The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world"* (John 6:51). He is telling everyone that the bread to which he is referring is his flesh. While you begin to process this, those around you quarrel. People are outraged but are mainly confused. So, Jesus gets more specific and emphatic. *"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life... My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink"* (53, 55). Whoa! Jesus of Nazareth wants to give his flesh and blood as food and drink.

This realization spreads through the crowd. It is such a large gathering, and it takes a while for everyone to hear what's been said. Slowly, people start to leave. *"This is a hard teaching...who can accept it?"* (60) is what you hear some of them say as they turn away from Jesus. And, you agree, this is a hard teaching. But, you haven't moved, and aren't planning on leaving just yet.

You look over at Jesus' closest disciples. You notice a very perplexed Peter. Jesus asks them if they are leaving, too. Peter says, with probably a dazed and confused look, *"Lord, where are we going to go? You have the words of eternal life"* (68). When you hear these words come from Peter's lips, your heart skips a beat. You are thinking, 'Has Jesus just been speaking the words of eternal life? Is this, in fact, a message from heaven? Could this be true? Is he really going to give us his flesh to eat? And, will it get us to heaven? Is this the newest, most radical teaching from God? Do I believe what I am hearing?'

Awesome

A woman at a Catholic parish in Maryland volunteered to be an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist. She went to a training session with five other people on a Saturday morning in her parish. Part of the training included unlocking and locking the door of the tabernacle (the dwelling place of the Eucharist). With her eyes on the tabernacle that was about three feet away, she froze. She couldn't move in front of the throne of Jesus. She began to shake uncontrollably and weep. No one in the group knew what to do.

Many seconds passed before she was able to step towards the tabernacle and practice opening and closing the door. When the training session ended, she went into the sacristy, sobbing profusely. Someone consoled her for a few minutes. She said, "Before today, I thought that the Eucharist was just a symbol. But, when I was up there in front of the tabernacle, I definitely felt a presence."

God on earth. Awesome! This is the amazing reality of the Eucharist. For the Jews 2000 years ago or the woman at the tabernacle, God is very close and personal. In the Eucharist, we are in the presence of the Almighty, at whose name *"every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth"* (Phil 2:10). The eternal Son of our heavenly Father is present to us on earth in a

very real way so that we may *"taste and see that the Lord is good"* (Psalm 34).

The Eucharist is the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. Through the eyes of faith, **we see Jesus under the signs of bread and wine**. It might look like bread and taste like bread, but it isn't bread. Jesus says at the Last Supper, *"This is my body"* (Mt 26:26). He commands the apostles to *"take this, all of you, and eat it"* (Mt 26:26). He not only gives his body and blood to his first priests for them to eat and drink, he commands them to *"do this in memory of me"* (Mt 26:26). Today, Catholic priests continue to live out this command every time they celebrate the Eucharist (Mass).



The saints are mysterious to us. We often feel that we can't relate to them because their lives are so extraordinary. What is their secret? The Eucharist. For example, Mother Teresa explained that receiving the Eucharist every day was the only way she could serve some of the poorest and most ill people in the world in such awful conditions. As different as all the saints are, the one thing they have in common is a great love for the Eucharist. They are nourished with Christ; he propels them to do heroic works. *"Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit"* (Jn 15:5).

If you could meet anyone on earth, who would it be? Let's say you are given an hour alone with this person. What would you want to ask them or talk about? What would you like to say to them? How would you get ready for such a meeting? How would you dress? Would you tell all of your friends about it?