

Mysterium Fidei: Abide in My Eucharistic Heart

2023-09-21- [Fr. Larry Swink](#)

Once again, Fr. Swink opened our hearts and our minds to the beauty of our Catholic Faith, this time through Pope St. Paul VI's encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* on the Holy Eucharist. The talk was a wonderful introduction to our theme this year. "[Mysterium Fidei](#)" or "The Mystery of Faith" are the words of the priest right after consecration. These words point to the source and summit of our Catholic Faith. Sadly, many Catholics have lost their faith in the Eucharist, and as Father pointed out, if we don't believe in the Eucharist, everything else falls apart.

The encyclical was written in 1965, after the conclusion of Vatican II, a time of great confusion in the church, especially following the dramatic changes to the celebration of the Mass. Father told us that often an ecumenical council is followed by 40 years of absolute chaos, and Vatican II was no exception. Father said that Vatican II itself was inspired by the Holy Spirit, but it was in many ways hijacked. If what was taught in Vatican II made it to the pews and into the parishes, we would not be so divided today. The spirit of Vatican II was not what Vatican II proclaimed. Pope St. Paul VI recognized the "bad theology" being promulgated by this false spirit that impacted priests and lay faithful alike. The bad theology saw a whole new church in the making, but Vatican II was more about renewing, not changing the church. Thus, the encyclical was a reaffirming what we always believed and an examination of errors introduced into the church by the bad theology.

1) The Mass is a Sacrifice, not just a meal.

Pope St. Paul VI affirmed that Vatican II was indeed holy, and the changes about the Mass were about celebrating in utmost devotion - understanding with greater clarity what was happening in the Mass, praying more vividly and more devoutly. But at the same time, he saw some errors creeping in — in particular, putting aside the sacrifice of the Mass, and making it more of a family meal. The Eucharist is indeed a meal, a divine meal, but first and foremost it is the sacrifice of the cross, forever linked to the Last Supper and to Calvary. Pope St. Paul was affirming what we have always believed, not adding or taking away from doctrine. The priest offers the sacrifice of the Mass daily for the sins of the world. The Mass is about Christ, not us. Nor is the Mass about the personality of the priest. We need reverence in the Mass, something mysterious is happening. The Mass is not just about the people — it is about them too, but primarily it is the way God the Father wanted to be worshipped prefigured in the Passover meal and sacrifice in Egypt.

2) The Role of the Laity and of Priests

In the Mass the priest says "Pray brethren that MY sacrifice and YOURS may be acceptable to God the almighty Father" which implies both priest and the people are offering a sacrifice together, which is what is meant by full, active participation in the Mass. Unfortunately, this full, active participation got misinterpreted to mean that everyone has a role in the drama of the Mass. Pope St. Paul clarified the distinction between the ministerial priesthood of the priest and the common priesthood of the people. For example, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are in fact Extraordinary, and should not be part of every Mass, sometimes even replacing the priest in serving the Eucharist to the people. There was a [clericalizing of the laity and a laicizing of the clergy](#). Everyone is doing a job, but it is not the job they are supposed to be doing. It is the job of the clergy to offer the sacrifice of the Mass, and it is the job of the laity to take our lives, our joys, our sorrows and unite them to the sacrifice of the priest, who is acting in Persona Christi. Our sacrifice is what we do outside of church. We do not go to the Mass to feel important or to take on our special role, we go to the Mass to become holy. What does it mean to actively participate in the Mass? It means to pray the Mass well, to pray with the priest, and to unite ourselves with Christ, and to rediscover a sense of the sacred.

3) The Real Presence

We are the body of Christ (the Church is the mystical body of Christ), but we are NOT the same as the Eucharist! There are different ways Christ is present in His Church. He is present when she prays, where two or three are gathered in His name... He is present when she performs works of mercy, when the priest is celebrating the sacraments, when the Gospel is proclaimed. But in the Eucharist, Christ becomes truly present — whole and entire, God and Man, in body, blood, soul and divinity. Pope St. Paul spoke of the error of "[Transignification](#)" which sees a spiritual change in the bread, but it was a temporary change, and after the Mass, it was no longer Jesus, which makes Eucharistic Adoration impossible. From the Council of Trent, we have the word transubstantiation which affirms what the Church has always believed, that the bread and wine are truly changed into the body and blood of Jesus, even though the appearance remains. The bread and wine do become a sign of something sacred and spiritual nourishment, but this is not the whole truth. They contain a new reality and this is an ontological change (the essence of it has completely changed), just as we are ontologically changed by baptism, and the priest by ordination.

Father Swink suggested we encourage our pastors to have a presentation on Eucharistic miracles as a way to promote worship of the Eucharist. He mentioned bringing the Carlo Acutis Eucharistic Miracles display to our parishes. Father Swink told us the story of his personal favorite [Eucharistic Miracle from Cascia](#). [\(Video\)](#)

4) Devotion to the Eucharist

The final part of *Mysterium Fidei* promotes devotion to the Eucharist — encouraging us: to actively participate in the sacrifice of the Mass, to receive communion with a pure heart, to go to confession, and to prepare our soul to receive our Lord. Priests need to offer frequent confession times, make it available and easily accessible to all. The document also promotes worship of the Eucharist outside of the Mass via Adoration. It is difficult to fall in love with the Eucharist without spending some quality time with Him. We need to talk to Him, pray, and listen. We need not tell Him what to do. What it means to abide in His Sacred Heart is to know Him, to make Him a part of our lives, and to trust Him. We need to TRUST His Plan, which is hard for us to do. We know the Story ends well, but we forget this in the midst of life. Life mostly does not work out the way we wanted it to, but that is OK. Maybe, that is what He wants. Bring it to Him in prayer - "I know You are there, but You are hidden." Or "Are You really there? Can You hear me? Do You love me? Is it going to be OK?" If we are really, really quiet, He will answer. And then, don't just GO to Mass, but LIVE the Mass. Unite our suffering and pains to His sacrifice. Everything makes sense when we unite it to the altar. We are supposed to suffer, to die, and rise like Jesus. We can only do it well if we do it through Him, with Him, in Him. This is what is meant by active participation. It is a struggle of Faith; it is a mystery, our life is a mystery, and only He knows the mystery. Mass is also a celebration of life, of the Resurrection, the beauty of Easter Sunday after the horror of Good Friday. Ask for the Grace to believe in the mystery: Jesus is hidden in the priest, hidden in the Eucharist, hidden in His Word, and He is also hidden in us.

5) Conclusion

Fr. Swink concluded his talk with a beautiful meditation on Our Blessed Mother — Let us think of her receiving the Eucharist from St. John the Apostle — she knew this was the same Son held as a baby, held underneath the cross when he died, she knew Who she was receiving. Let us all receive Him with her conviction.

See video, reflection questions, and references on this [LINK](#)