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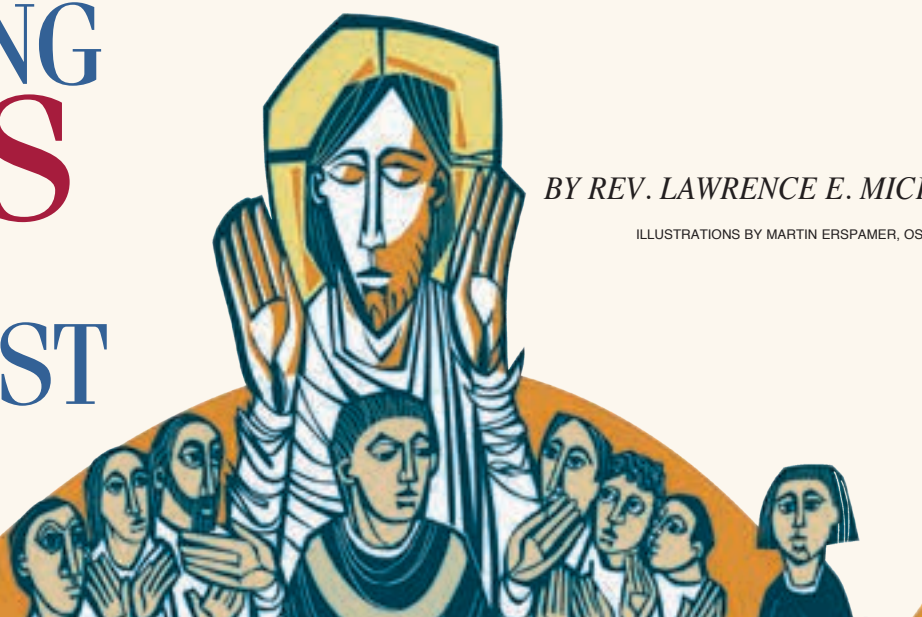
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FINDING Jesus IN THE EUCHARIST FOUR WAYS HE IS PRESENT

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“Where is Jesus?” is a key question for all of us who celebrate the Eucharist. In his encyclical letter on the Eucharist, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Pope John Paul II recalled the program he suggested for the Church in his letter at the close of the Jubilee Year: “To contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the program which I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium” (6). “To contemplate Christ,” the pope added, “involves being able to recognize him wherever he manifests himself, in his many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of his body and his blood.”

The challenge of recognizing the face of Christ goes far beyond the Eucharist, for we are called to see his presence in all our brothers and sisters. The Eucharist, however, teaches us how to recognize him and where to look for him. If we grow in our ability to recognize him when we gather to celebrate the Mass, we will also find it easier to see his face around us all through the week.

WHERE IS JESUS?

Most Catholics have been well trained to recognize the presence of Christ in the bread and wine that we believe becomes the very Body and Blood of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist. We have long called this the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

The Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, reminded us that there are also other ways that Christ can be found in the Eucharist. Echoing the teaching of Popes Pius X, XI, and XII earlier in the 20th century, the Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy spoke of four modes of Christ's presence: "To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,' but especially under the eucharistic elements. By his power he is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for he promised: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matthew 18:20)" (CSL 7).

Christ is present in the Eucharist, then, (1) in the assembly that gathers in Christ's name, (2) in the priest or bishop who presides, (3) in the word proclaimed in our midst, and (4) in the eucharistic elements of bread and wine. Though they differ from each other, each of these presences is real, and each offers us a unique opportunity to recognize Christ with us.

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