

Catholic

UPDATE

© 2018 LIGUORI PUBLICATIONS, A REDEMPTORIST MINISTRY.

ONE LIGUORI DRIVE
LIGUORI, MO
63057-9999

800-325-9521
LIGUORI.ORG

PHOTOCOPYING
PROHIBITED.

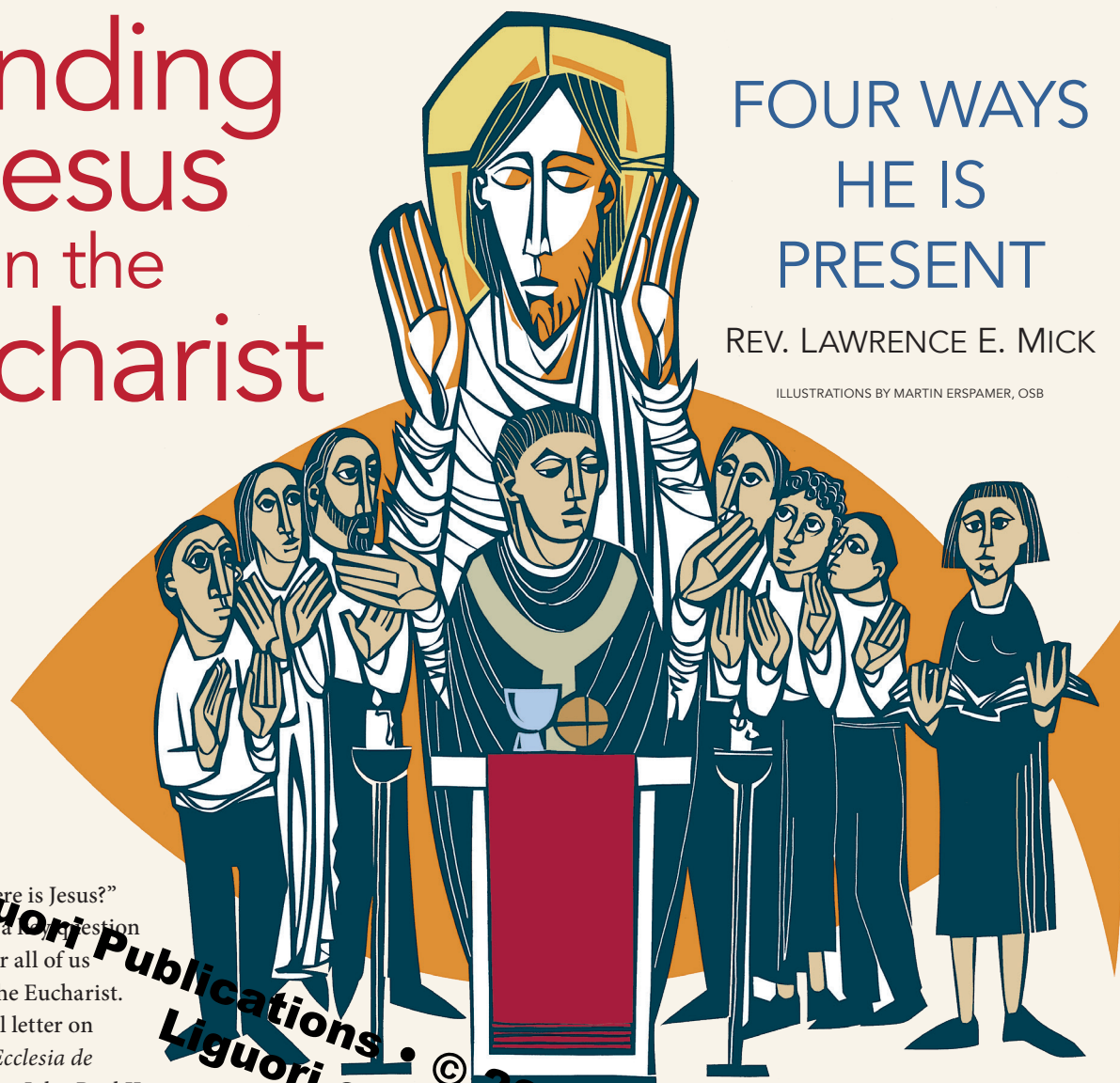
C0507A

Finding Jesus in the Eucharist

FOUR WAYS HE IS PRESENT

REV. LAWRENCE E. MICK

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARTIN ERSPAMER, OSB



“Where is Jesus?”
is a 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. 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.

A QUESTION OF REVERENCE

In the days soon after the council, a common complaint from those who found the reforms in the liturgy difficult to accept was that putting the Mass in English and having the priest face the people took the reverence out of the Mass. That raises the question of just what reverence is and what it means to be reverent. It seems to me that reverence means to recognize and then respond to the presence of the divine.



Liguori Publications •
Liguori

• 800-325-9521
All rights reserved.