

Archbishop Smith: We Know He's There!



I never cease to be amazed by the insights of children. As we celebrated this past weekend the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, or The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, my mind went to a story recounted for me years ago by a parishioner. In a religious education class for ten-year olds, the teacher asked: "What is the difference between Jesus on the crucifix you see on the wall and Jesus in the Eucharist." After a few minutes of silence, one little girl said, "Well, when I look at the crucifix I can see Jesus, but I know he's not there. When I look at the Host, I know he's there, but I can't see him."



What is the difference between Jesus on the crucifix you see on the wall and Jesus in the Eucharist?

Exactly. We know he's there! This is the astounding and exciting mystery of the Most Holy Eucharist. Jesus is truly present, body and blood, soul and divinity. What were once simple gifts of bread and wine are bread and wine no longer but the real presence of our Crucified and Risen Lord. As he promised, Jesus gives himself to us in this wondrous sacrament as nourishment for our pilgrim journey. To the faithful reception of this gift is linked the pledge of eternal life (cf. *John* 6:54).



In the readings for the Solemnity, there is an important teaching in the Letter to the Hebrews that I wouldn't want us to miss. It speaks of the power of the blood of Christ, with which we have communion at mass, to "purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!" (Heb. 9:14) Jesus came among us to restore humanity to right worship. Ever since Adam and Eve surrendered to the lie of the devil, humanity has been plunged in the misery that results from wrong worship, from the worship not of God but of the self, not of the Creator but of the created. The lie is that God is not to be trusted, that He is a threat to our autonomy and freedom, that we can instead be self-reliant and find happiness in the pursuit not of God's will but of our unbridled desires. This same lie continues to be perpetuated in our own day. Its frequency of repetition gradually lulls the human conscience to sleep, to the point that what is abhorrent to God and the moral law is viewed and hailed as worthy of celebration and good for humanity. The heartbreaking result of the recent referendum on abortion in Ireland is just the latest tragic example. The conscience must be purified so as once again to worship rightly and thus see reality rightly, and for this we must have communion with the blood of Christ, as *Hebrews* teaches. This communion is given uniquely in the sacrament of the Eucharist.



The words of the little girl are of great import. They point us to the One who makes himself present to us in the Eucharist, the One who alone has the power to transform the world. May the Lord guard us from all indifference to this great mystery, awaken within us a renewed zeal to partake of his Eucharistic presence, and by his power heal our personal and collective conscience for the transformation of our world.