



From the Pastor
4th Sunday of
Advent - B
December 24, 2023

CHRISTMAS DURING THE EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL. Since the 4th Sunday of Advent's bulletin is the **Christmas** bulletin, We'll reflect on both the **Mysteries** of the **Incarnation** and the

Eucharist. As you may know, we are halfway through the **US Bishops' three-year National Eucharistic Revival**; a series of articles about it may be found on our Parish website. It is intended to help **Catholics** and others better **understand, celebrate** and **receive** the great **Gift of Eucharist.** So, '**Christmas**' - which comes from the words '**Christ's Mass**' or the **holy Mass** offered to celebrate His **Nativity** or **Birth**, is the perfect 'starting point' to reflect on these two interwoven and inseparable **Mysteries.**

Technically, the **Eucharist** was instituted at the **Last Supper**, but the stage was set for **Christ's** ability to be truly present in the **Eucharist** when He was conceived in the **Virgin's** womb nine months before **Christmas.** What had been refigured in many ways: the **Manna** or bread from heaven which fed the **Israelites** on their desert journey; the **Sacrificial Lambs**, whose blood safeguarded their home from the **Passover Angel of Death**; and the **Ark of the Covenant** which housed the **Ten Commandments** and a **jar of Manna**; was now seen in human flesh and blood in the **newborn King.** [We call the **Blessed Virgin** the '**New Ark of the Covenant**' since she bore **God's Word-made Flesh** and the '**Bread of Life**' in her womb.]

The prophesy: "... **Bethlehem-Ephrathah ... from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel.**" [Cf. Micah 5:1b] gives another **Eucharistic** clue. **Bethlehem** means '**House of Bread**,' and the **Child's Mother** "**laid him in a manger**" because "**there was no room for them in the inn.**" [Cf. Luke 2:7] A **manger** is an **animal's feeding trough**, and the word **Luke** uses for '**inn**' is akin to the word he uses to describe the '**Upper Room**': the site of the **Last Supper** and institution of the **Eucharist.**

As we will soon celebrate on the **Epiphany**, the **Magi** came to adore the **Christ Child** 'on bended knee' or by prostrating themselves before Him, offering to Him their precious gifts. Is this not

what we do at every **holy Mass**: kneel before the **Eucharistic Lord**, after offering our costly gifts for use in His service? Are we not directed to genuflect before the **Blessed Sacrament** when we enter and leave **Christ's Real Presence**?

Should we also be willing, as were the **Shepherds** and the **Magi**, to travel whatever distance is necessary to find and be with the **Child** and His **Mother**? That's one reason every **Catholic Church** has a **Tabernacle** in which our **Eucharistic Lord** dwells, and an image of His **Mother.** No wonder at most **Sunday** and **festive Masses** we sing the same chant the **Angels** first sang on that first **Christmas**: "**Glory to God in the highest....**" That makes every **holy Mass** another little **Christmas.**

While some question the cost of sacred vessels, vestments, worship sites, and other liturgical necessities, we are consistent with the first **Christmas.** **Everyone** presumably brought their best: sheep or cattle, ox or ass, straw or hay; or gold, frankincense or myrrh; there was even a borrowed cave that foreshadowed the borrowed tomb in which our **Lord's Body** would be buried! The **Spanish 'The Rose Tree Carol'** makes an interesting contrast of how Jesus went "**...from the virgin womb to the virgin tomb.**" In our own time, **Sacraments** use what is 'earthly' and 'ordinary' and to be vehicles of the 'heavenly' and 'extraordinary!' While the '**Little Drummer Boy**' is just a legend, it, too, bears out our need to bring our very best as a gift to the **Lord.**

Throughout the course of His earthly life, **Jesus** continued to reveal, by word and action, sign and symbol, the future mystery of the **Eucharist.** He miraculously fed thousands with a few loaves; He explained how His **Flesh** and **Blood** are **True Food** and **True Drink**; **Saint John the Baptist** declared Him "**the Lamb of God**" [John 1:29], who takes away the sins of the world, which we will hear in a few weeks, on the **2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time - B.** At the **Last Supper**, He instituted the **Eucharist** as His parting and greatest **Gift.**

As a **New Year's** resolution, do more to better understand, more actively celebrate, and more worthily receive the great **Gift of Eucharist.** Give our **Eucharistic Lord** a central place in your mind and heart, home and schedule. **Merry Christmas** and **Happy New Year 2024.**

In Christ,

Father Mark

Rev. Mark A. Kreder, Pastor