

My Brothers and Sisters,

“*For where two or three or gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*”  
With these words, Jesus promised to be with us and among us always. Jesus is never more present to us than when we come together to celebrate Eucharist, and we believe that Jesus is present to us in multiple ways in the Eucharist.

First, he is present to us in his word. This is why the Second Vatican Council said that when we celebrate Eucharist, we are fed from two tables, the table of God’s word and the table of Christ’s body [DV 21]. God’s word is a living word. Because it is the living word of God, lectors do not just read from the Scriptures: they proclaim God’s word.

For us to experience Christ’s presence in his word, we need to become more familiar with Scripture, especially the Gospels. If we want Christ to speak to us through his word, one of the best things we can do is to read and reflect on a Gospel passage every day, allowing it to speak to us.

Second, Jesus is present to us in the Eucharist. At the Last Supper, Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” For the Jews of Jesus’ time, remembrance meant more than remembering. Whenever we celebrate Eucharist, we bridge the gap in space and time between the Last Supper and us and between Jesus’ death on the cross and us. In other words, when we celebrate Eucharist, the Last Supper and Jesus’ death on the cross are made real and present among us. Of course, we believe in Jesus’ real presence in the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion.

Finally, when we celebrate Eucharist, Jesus is present among us in his Spirit. What this means is that there is a real presence of Christ in the community itself before we proclaim God’s word or celebrate the sacrament. How do we manifest his presence? For example, we are a welcoming community, but how welcoming are we? Do we make a point of introducing ourselves and welcoming people we do not know? We have lots of lectors and Eucharistic ministers, but we do not have enough greeters. The task of greeter probably should be more than offering books to people as they come in. It might include walking around and introducing ourselves and welcoming unfamiliar people. I recently read an article about a mega-church at which on any given Sunday there are 150 “secret greeters” besides those assigned to hospitality.<sup>1</sup> Are we really a Eucharistic community? In other words, do we actively give thanks in word and song? For example, if a visitor came in and sat down next to you, would he or she hear you giving thanks in prayer and song?

Of course, Jesus is also present among us in his Spirit whenever as Christians we are trying to live Christian lives within our communities. For example, do we manifest the presence of Christ within our families? Do our families manifest the presence of Christ within our neighborhoods? Does our parish manifest the presence of Christ within the larger community of which we are part? All of these are important questions.

My brothers and sisters, according to St. Paul, the one thing we owe to one another is love. As he pointed out, “*love does no evil to the neighbor.*” At the same time, the Prophet Ezekiel reminds us to encourage one another to do good and to avoid evil. Finally, in the Gospel, Jesus told his disciples to strive to resolve conflicts constructively. If we love one another, avoid evil, encourage one another to do good and to avoid evil, and strive to resolve conflicts constructively, we will manifest Jesus’ presence among us. “*For where two or three or gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*”

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<sup>1</sup>Rez Gopez-Sindac, “Chris Gunnare,” *Church Executive*, May/June 2014, p. 9.