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To Know Jesus Christ
Eucharistic Lord is present, waiting for us in Eucharist

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Plans are underway for our next diocesan Eucharistic Congress, to be held Sept. 21-22, 2007 at the Charlotte Convention Center. Please reserve the dates on your calendar and make plans to participate.

This will be our third Eucharistic Congress for the Diocese of Charlotte. At this annual event, the whole diocese comes together as one family to celebrate our faith and our love for Jesus.

The encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist

The theme for this year's congress is taken from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "To Know Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 2:2).

After an apparently unsuccessful attempt to evangelize the Athenians through a philosophical presentation of Jesus (Acts 17), St. Paul resolved to present a different Jesus when he went to preach to the Corinthians. He decided to preach the Christ whom he knew personally: the Christ who suffered, was crucified, died, was buried, and whom he met as risen from the dead.

Thus St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). This is the real Jesus whom St. Paul knew through a personal encounter on the road to Damascus.

How does this encounter of St. Paul with the risen Lord relate to the Holy Eucharist? The living Christ whom St. Paul knew and proclaimed to the Corinthians is the same living Christ whom we meet in the Eucharist: the Christ who suffered, was crucified, died, was buried and who rose from the dead.

In the Eucharist, we encounter Jesus Christ who is really and substantially present in his body, blood, soul and divinity. In the Eucharist, the risen Lord brings us into sacramental communion with himself and draws us into the paschal mystery of his suffering, death and resurrection.

Thus we come to know him as St. Paul did in the fullness of his paschal mystery. Pope John Paul II wrote in his encyclical on the Eucharist:

"At every celebration of the Eucharist, we are spiritually brought back to the paschal Triduum: to the events of the evening of Holy Thursday, to the Last Supper and to what followed it.

"The institution of the Eucharist sacramentally anticipated the events which were about to take place, beginning with the agony in Gethsemane. Once again we see Jesus as he leaves the Upper Room, descends with his disciples to the Kidron Valley and goes to the Garden of Olives.... Christ

in prayer was filled with anguish ‘and his sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground.’

“The blood, which shortly before he had given to the Church as the drink of salvation in the sacrament of the Eucharist, began to be shed; its outpouring would then be completed on Golgotha to become the means of our redemption.... The agony in Gethsemane was the introduction to the agony of the Cross on Good Friday: the holy hour, the hour of the redemption of the world” (Ecclesia de Eucharistia 3, 4).

The events of the paschal mystery of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection are made present to us in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is thus Jesus’ “gift of himself, of his person in his sacred humanity, as well as the gift of his saving work” (Eccl. de Euch. 11).

The desire to know Jesus

Our faith in Jesus allows us to know him and to recognize his real presence in the Eucharist. Our faith in Jesus also moves our hearts to want to be with him whom we have met.

Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, our eyes are opened and we recognize him because of the gift of faith. Our hearts are enkindled and we long for his presence.

Pope John Paul II wrote: “Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the faithful can in some way relive the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: ‘their eyes were opened and they recognized him’ (Lk 24: 31)” (Eccl. de Euch. 6).

Jesus is really present and we can know him in the Eucharist. We recognize his presence, and our hearts desire to draw close to him.

Our reverence for the Blessed Sacrament is a sign that we do know that Jesus is really present in the Holy Eucharist and that we love him. Through our devotion to our Eucharistic Lord, may our union with Jesus deepen and intensify. May we bring this living knowledge of Jesus with us into all our parish activities, and into the celebration of our next Eucharistic Congress.

To know Jesus Christ we turn to the Eucharist, where Jesus is really present and waiting for us. I look forward to seeing you at the congress, filled with love for our Eucharistic Lord.