

CHAPTER III

Come Again?  
*The Real Presence  
as Parousia*



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There is a world of difference between the way we talk about the Real Presence today and the way the ancient Church talked about the doctrine.

Catholics today often speak of the Real Presence in terms of a crisis—that is, a crisis of faith. In 1992, a Gallup poll concluded that only thirty percent of Catholics in the United States believe that the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, while “nearly seventy percent . . . hold erroneous beliefs about Christ’s presence in the Eucharist.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, a large majority would seem to disbelieve, or simply not know, the Church’s perennial teaching: “At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, by the word of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ’s Body and Blood” (*Catechism*, no. 1333).

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Frank Chacon and Jim Burnham, introduction to *Beginning Apologetics 3: How to Explain and Defend the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist* (Farmington, NM: San Juan Catholic Seminars, 2000), 4.

A 1997 study produced results similar to those of 1994. Since then, bishops, catechists, and even scholars have worried about this data, and pondered how the Church might solve the problem.

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides an excellent beginning, in a section titled “The presence of Christ by the power of his word and the Holy Spirit” (nos. 1373–1381). The section states the fact of the Real Presence and speaks at some length about the process that converts the elements of bread and wine into Christ’s Body and Blood. “This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation [Council of Trent (1551): DS 1642; cf. Mt. 26:26 ff.; Mk. 14:22 ff.; Lk. 22:19 ff.; 1 Cor. 11:24 ff.]” (no. 1376). The *Catechism* then moves to the logical conclusion of belief in transubstantiation:<sup>2</sup> adoring worship of the Eucharist.

The word *transubstantiation* is fitting and proper, and the *Catechism*’s description of the process is succinct yet profound. But these are not the ultimate solution to the Church’s crisis of Eucharistic faith. For the term describes a process, but not the end result of that process. For that, we need to press on in our study and contemplation. As the *Catechism* itself reminds us: “We do not believe in formulas, but in those realities they express, which

<sup>2</sup> Pope John Paul II in the Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* defines transubstantiation:

The sacramental re-presentation of Christ’s sacrifice, crowned by the resurrection, in the Mass involves a most special presence which—in the words of Paul VI—“is called ‘real’ not as a way of excluding all other types of presence as if they were ‘not real’, but because it is a presence in the fullest sense: a substantial presence whereby Christ, the God-Man, is wholly and entirely present”. This sets forth once more the perennially valid teaching of the Council of Trent: “the consecration of the bread and wine effects the change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. And the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called this change transubstantiation”. Truly the Eucharist is a *mysterium fidei*, a mystery which surpasses our understanding and can only be received in faith, as is often brought out in the catechesis of the Church Fathers regarding this divine sacrament: “Do not see—Saint Cyril of Jerusalem exhorts—in the bread and wine merely natural elements, because the Lord has expressly said that they are his body and his blood: faith assures you of this, though your senses suggest otherwise” (*EE* 15).

faith allows us to touch. “The believer’s act of faith does not terminate in the propositions, but in the realities which they express” [Saint Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II, 1, 2 *ad* 2]” (no. 170).

What is the reality expressed by the formula? What, in essence, is the presence that faith allows us to touch?

In this study, I would like to return to the sources of Christian doctrine, Scripture and Tradition, to discover—and recover—the authentic understanding of Jesus’ Real Presence. Therein, I believe, lies the resolution of the crisis of Eucharistic faith, and many other crises as well, both personal and communal.

## Opening Presence

The early Christians also spoke of the Real Presence in terms of crisis, but a different sort of crisis. They spoke of the Real Presence in the language of *apocalypse*—the Second Coming, the consummation of history, the end of the world. Indeed, in the works of the Church Fathers and in the earliest liturgies, “Eucharist” and “second coming” are often treated as equivalent terms, showing the close link between the two meanings of the “coming” of Christ. The Eucharist is the awaited parousia, the coming of Christ, exactly as Jesus Himself promised it would be, exactly as Saint Paul described it, exactly as Saint John saw it “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10).

The Eucharist is the parousia. I have given many lectures on this subject since 1999, when I published *The Lamb’s Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth*. In that book, I examined the Book of Revelation in light of the liturgies of the Church and of Israel, and I examined the Church’s Mass in light of the biblical Apocalypse. Most of my readers and listeners were aware that the Book of Revelation had something to say about the coming of Jesus at the end of the world. Few knew, however, that the Book of Revelation had anything to say about Jesus’ coming in the Eucharist.

The idea seems alien to faithful churchgoers in the twenty-first century. Yet it was commonplace to Christians of the first, second, and third centuries; and, to scholars of history—whether

Catholic or not—the notion appears so pervasive as to be obvious. The great historical theologian Jaroslav Pelikan, writing as a Lutheran, observed of the early Church: “The coming of Christ was ‘already’ and ‘not yet’: he had come already—in the incarnation, and on the basis of the incarnation would come in the Eucharist; he had come already in the Eucharist, and would come at the last in the new cup that he would drink with them in his Father’s kingdom.”<sup>3</sup>

Though a final parousia will one day come, the Eucharist is the parousia here and now. Anglican scholar Gregory Dix wrote that this notion was “universal” by the third century, and probably long before, since he adds that there are no exceptions to this rule: “[N]o pre-Nicene author Eastern or Western whose Eucharistic doctrine is at all fully stated” holds a different view.<sup>4</sup>

Consider just two examples. The ancient Jerusalem liturgy of Saint James announces: “Let all mortal flesh be silent, and stand with fear and trembling, and meditate nothing earthly within itself: for the King of kings and Lord of lords, Christ our God, comes forward.”<sup>5</sup> The Egyptian liturgy of Saint Sarapion proclaims: “This sacrifice is full of your glory.”<sup>6</sup> Similar passages can be found in the liturgies of Saint Mark, Saint Hippolytus, the Apostolic Constitutions, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Cyril of Alexandria, as well as the Roman Canon.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, vol. 1, in *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* series (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 126. See also Oscar Cullmann, “The Meaning of the Lord’s Supper in Primitive Christianity,” in *Essays on the Lord’s Supper*, in *Ecumenical Studies in Worship* series, no. 1 (London: Lutterworth, 1958), 15: “Hence, in the early Church, the Lord’s Supper involved the presence of Christ in its threefold relation with Easter, with the cult and with the *Parousia*.”

<sup>4</sup> Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: A&C Black, 1945), 252–53.

<sup>5</sup> “The Cherubic Hymn,” in *The Divine Liturgy of Saint James, the Holy Apostle and Brother of the Lord*, sect. II, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 540.

<sup>6</sup> John Wordsworth, ed. and trans., *Bishop Sarapion’s Prayer-Book: An Egyptian Summary Dated Probably about AD 350–356* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1899), 61.

<sup>7</sup> For an excellent discussion of these and similar passages, see Jerome Gassner, O.S.B., *The Canon of the Mass*, (New York: Herder, 1950), 158.

What the ancients saw in the liturgy was the coming of Christ, the parousia; and what they meant by parousia is what we today should mean by the Real Presence. But our ancestors seem to have held that belief more firmly, and understood it more fully, than most Catholics do today.

If we want to recover such universality of belief, we might start again at the beginning. Thus, I propose to revisit a number of relevant biblical texts and read them with the Church Fathers, to see what so many people today are missing when they go to Mass.

## Get Real

When I say that we speak differently of the Real Presence today, I do not mean to imply that the content of faith has changed. It hasn't. In fact, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* presents much of its Eucharistic doctrine in quotations from Church Fathers who lived before the year 200. The *Catechism* echoes the flesh-and-blood realism of the earliest Christians when it says: "[T]he bread and wine . . . become Christ's Body and Blood" (no. 1333).

To say this is to take Jesus Christ at His word: "This is my body" (Lk. 22:19), He pronounced over the bread at the Last Supper. And He preached at the synagogue of Capernaum: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" (Jn. 6:51).

What did these statements mean to the early Church? In the year 107, Saint Ignatius of Antioch said that it was a mark of true faith to confess the Eucharist "to be the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, in His goodness, raised up again."<sup>8</sup> Some fifty years later, Saint

<sup>8</sup> Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans*, chap. VII, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 89.

Justin Martyr wrote that “the food blessed by the prayer of His word . . . is the flesh and blood of Jesus who was made flesh.”<sup>9</sup>

“Bread and wine” become “Body and Blood.” The Church took Christ at His word. This doctrine faced no significant challenge in the first Christian millennium. In every generation and in every geographic corner of the Church, the Fathers bore witness to the Real Presence: Irenaeus of Lyons, Hippolytus of Rome, Tertullian of Carthage, Clement of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom of Antioch. Even Theodore of Mopsuestia, a man whose christology of “indwelling” was condemned as heretical, could not bring himself to speak of the Eucharist in any but the realistic and sacramental terms of the Church—even though that realism was incompatible with his own theological method.<sup>10</sup>

The early Christians spoke with one voice in this matter. Yet they did not speak at length, for they observed a certain discretion, which today we call the “discipline of the secret.” The sacraments were most sacred—they were actions of the Lord Himself—and so they were not to be publicly disputed, scientifically probed, or otherwise subjected to unnecessary scrutiny.

Since no one disputed the doctrine, philosophical theology had little to say about the Real Presence until the turn of the second millennium. Only then did heresies arise to challenge the doctrine; only then did theologians develop a technical vocabulary, in order to refute the heresies.

## Paul in Person

But it is not the specialized vocabulary that I want to examine here. Those terms are helpful, but they are secondary. In this brief space, I wish instead to look at what is primary.

Thus, it is to the Bible I want to return, to certain inspired words about Jesus’ Real Presence.

<sup>9</sup> Saint Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin*, as quoted in Mike Aquilina, *The Mass of the Early Christians* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2001), 41.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 236–37.

It is easy enough to see where in Scripture the Fathers learned their flesh-and-blood realism. Christ's Eucharistic words are plain enough, in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel and in the four accounts of the Last Supper (cf. Mt. 26:27–29; Mk. 14:22–25; Lk. 22:14–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–26). But where in the New Testament did they find their Eucharistic understanding of the parousia—which seems so unlike the modern ideas of both the Real Presence and the Second Coming?

The Greek word *parousia* means “coming, arrival, or advent.” In Christian parlance, it has come to mean, specifically, Christ's return in glory at the end of time. Jesus Himself used the term many times in describing this eschatological event. For example: “as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming [parousia] of the Son of man” (Mt. 24:27).

Because of such passages, it can be difficult for us to think of parousia as meaning anything but a “coming in glory”—a dramatic divine interruption of history. But that is a theological projection onto a fairly common, and even mundane, Greek word. “Coming in glory” was not the meaning of the word in its original usage. Parousia could describe the visit of an emperor or king, and it was sometimes used that way. It could also describe a much less impressive event. When Saint Paul, for example, speaks of his own parousia, he gives it a decidedly self-deprecating cast: “For they [Paul's critics] say, ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence [parousia] is weak, and his speech of no account’” (2 Cor. 10:10).

Note that, here, all Paul means by his own parousia is his “bodily presence,” which he insists is unimpressive to the senses. He uses the word in the same sense in his letter to the Philippians: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence [parousia] but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

In both passages, Paul uses parousia to mean an immediate bodily presence, a presence that is real, though visually and aurally unimposing.

Is it not likely that Jesus used the word *parousia* to connote the same things? Is it not possible that He meant a bodily presence that was real, but unimposing to the senses?

I acknowledge that this is not the interpretation of *parousia* given by many modern preachers, especially among evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants. But consider the expectations of Jesus' own generation. The Jews of His time read the Old Testament prophecies as predictions of a messiah who would come with military power, overwhelming his enemies with spectacular victories. They were not prepared for a carpenter who laid down His life as a victim.

### Instant Gratification

Jesus had promised repeatedly that the kingdom was coming without delay. Midway through the "little apocalypse" of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says: "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place" (Mt. 24:35).

The early Christians expected immediate fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies. They expected an imminent *parousia*. Modern historians have found evidence of this expectation throughout the New Testament and the earliest Christian writings. The most ancient Eucharistic prayer that has survived, in the *Didache*, ends with the Aramaic word "*Maranatha*," that is, "Come, Lord!" The Book of Revelation begins with a promise to show "what must soon take place" (Rev. 1:1) and ends with the same words as the liturgy in the *Didache*: "Come, Lord Jesus!" Biblical scholar Margaret Barker has identified this word—"Maranatha!"—as the Church's primal Eucharistic prayer: "This links the return of the LORD to the Eucharist. Other lines of the [*Didache's*] prayer are ambiguous: 'Let this present world pass away', for example, could imply either a literal understanding of the LORD's return or the present transforming effect of the Eucharist. Maranatha in the Eucharist, however, must be the original epiclesis, praying for the coming of the LORD."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Barker, "Excursus: *Parousia* and the Liturgy," in *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 373.

Modern historians are right to point out the expectation of the apostolic age. They go wrong, however, when they conclude that the early Christians must have been disappointed with the passing of time. The apostate scholar Alfred Loisy observed that Jesus came promising the kingdom, but all He left behind was the Church. Loisy was disappointed by this turn of events, but the early Christians most certainly were not.

The early Christians knew that there would indeed be a parousia at the end of time, but there was no less a parousia right now, whenever they celebrated the Mass. When Christ comes at the end of time, He will have no less glory than He has whenever He comes to His Church in the Mass. The only difference, then, is in what we see.

Faced with the evidence of the ancient liturgies, skeptics will sometimes resort to psychoanalyzing the ancients. They say that the idea of a “liturgical *parousia*” was a late development and a coping mechanism for a disappointed Church. But it wasn’t late. Gregory Dix notes that it is in the very earliest documents; indeed, some scholars estimate that the liturgy of the *Didache* could have been written no later than AD 48.<sup>12</sup> After reviewing all the ancient Eucharistic texts, Jaroslav Pelikan concludes: “The Eucharistic liturgy was not a compensation for the postponement of the *parousia*, but a way of celebrating the presence of one who had promised to return.”<sup>13</sup>

After all, it was Jesus Himself who set such a high level of expectation in the Church; and it was Jesus Himself who pointed to its imminent fulfillment. Indeed, it was Jesus who established the Eucharist as an eschatological event—a parousia—a coming of the King and the kingdom. We must not miss the small but significant details in the scriptural accounts of the Last Supper. As Jesus takes the bread and wine, He says to His apostles: “I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer;

<sup>12</sup> On the dating of the *Didache*, see Enrico Mazza, *The Origins of Eucharistic Prayer* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 40–41.

<sup>13</sup> Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 126–27, italics in original.

for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. . . . I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Lk. 22:15–16, 18). As He institutes the sacrament, He institutes the kingdom. A moment later, He is speaking of the kingdom in terms of a “table” (22:27) and a “banquet” (22:30)—language that will recur in the final chapters of the Book of Revelation. If we are looking for familiar apocalyptic language, we will find it aplenty in Luke’s account of the Last Supper—but we will find it always expressed in Eucharistic terms. Thus, Jesus, using language which calls to mind the Eucharistic element, goes on to speak of apocalyptic trials, in which believers are “sift[ed] like wheat” (22:31).

No less an authority than Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger has noted that the New Testament’s apocalyptic imagery is overwhelmingly liturgical, and the Church’s liturgical language is overwhelmingly apocalyptic. “The parousia is the highest intensification and fulfillment of the liturgy,” he writes. “And the liturgy is parousia. . . . Every Eucharist is parousia, the Lord’s coming, and yet the Eucharist is even more truly the tensed yearning that He would reveal His hidden Glory.”<sup>14</sup>

### Thy Kingdom Come!

None of this precludes a parousia of Christ at the end of history. Theologians call that “coming” of Christ the “plenary parousia”—not because Christ will have a greater fullness then, but rather because we will be able to behold Him in His fullness, with our senses unveiled. For, since His coming, Christ is present in the world in a way that He was not in the Old Covenant; but He remains veiled in a way that He will not be at the end. The *Catechism* tells us: “The Kingdom of God has been coming since the Last Supper and, in the Eucharist, it is in our midst. The kingdom will come in glory when Christ hands it over to His Father” (no. 2816).

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Eschatology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 201, italics omitted.

It is interesting to note that the New Testament speaks not of Christ's "return" but of His "coming." In His Incarnation, He came; and, as He passed from human sight, He promised to sustain His presence forever: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt. 28:20).

Thus, His parousia—His presence—remains with us, even as we pray for its plenitude. In the same way, we live even now in Christ's kingdom, even though we daily pray, "Thy kingdom come." Contrary to Alfred Loisy's retort, Jesus delivered exactly the kingdom He had promised, and He delivered it as the Church. Recall that our Lord compared the kingdom to a dragnet filled with fish and with trash; recall that He compared it to a field full of both weeds and wheat. He could not have been speaking of the fulfillment of the kingdom at the end of time; for then there will be no trash, no weeds, no tears, no mourning, no crying, no pain, nor anything accursed (cf. Rev. 21:4, 22:3). He was speaking about the Church that we know today—the Church that is the kingdom, the kingdom where the King reigns in the Eucharist.

The kingdom is here now, though we do not yet have eyes to see its fullness. Today we know tears and mourning, but in the Mass, we still pray with the words that Christians used in the liturgy of the *Didache*: "For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours, now and forever."

The *Catechism* sums it up: "The Church knows that the Lord comes even now in his Eucharist and that he is there in our midst. However, his presence is veiled" (no. 1404).

## Judgment Day

The Eucharist is the parousia—the Real Presence. That is the Church's infallible reflection on the scriptural texts. But what difference should this make to us who go to Mass? The *Catechism* works out the implications for Christian belief and behavior (cf. nos. 1373–1378). I commend those points to your attention; but I would have you read them in light of Saint Paul's inspired words on the same subject.

To the Christians at Corinth, Paul poses a rhetorical question: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16). The word translated as “participation” is the Greek *koinonia*, which means “communion” or “sharing.” It has the same root as the word Saint Peter uses when he describes us Christians as “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4).

As if to emphasize the reality of this presence, Paul goes on, several lines later, to tell the story of Jesus’ institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, replete with the words: “This is my body. . . . This cup is the covenant in my blood” (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23–25). Quoting Jesus Himself, Paul leaves no doubt as to the substantial change that takes place in this supreme act of Christian worship.

Then, once Paul has established this presence, he evokes the parousia: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (v. 26). This resonates with everything else we have learned of the first generation of Christians. In their liturgy, they prayed “*Maranatha!*”—“Come, Lord!”—for they were engaged in the liturgy of His coming, His presence, His parousia.

Lest anyone doubt the reality of this presence—lest anyone think that Christ’s Eucharistic presence is somehow lacking in “power and glory”—Paul issues a grave and remarkable warning: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. . . . For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself” (1 Cor. 11:27, 29).

Whenever the New Testament speaks of Christ’s coming, it speaks also of His judgment. The Eucharistic parousia is a real presence—Christ coming in power to judge. His power is evident in its effects on those who receive Communion. Paul speaks specifically of those who receive unworthily and so bring judgment upon themselves. “That is why many of you are weak

and ill, and some have died” (1 Cor. 11:30). For such unrepentant sinners, the Eucharist is the final coming of Christ; it is the last judgment.

There is, however, an unspoken corollary to Paul’s account of the judgment of sinners. With the Eucharistic parousia comes also the judgment of the saints. If Christ’s coming means sickness and death to sinners, how much more will His coming mean blessings and health to those who “discern the Lord’s body”?

A liturgy of ancient Egypt expressed this well at the very moment of consecration, when it asks God to make every communicant worthy “to receive a medicine of life for the healing of every sickness and . . . not for condemnation.”<sup>15</sup>

This echoes the still-older praise of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, who called the Eucharist the “medicine of immortality, the antidote against death.”<sup>16</sup>

It is the glorified Christ who comes in the Eucharist, for communion with those who are worthy to receive the gift. For the saints, the judgment of the parousia is everlasting life, a share in Christ’s own resurrected flesh (cf. *EE* 18). At the end of the second century, Saint Irenaeus could ask: “How can they say that the flesh, which is nourished with the body of the Lord and with his blood, goes to corruption? . . . For the bread, which is produced from the earth, is no longer common bread, once it has received the invocation of God; it is then the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly. So also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but have the hope of the resurrection to eternity.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Wordsworth, *Bishop Sarapion’s Prayer-Book*, 63.

<sup>16</sup> Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, in *Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. 1: The Epistles of Saint Clement of Rome and Saint Ignatius of Antioch*, trans. James A. Kleist, S.J. (New York: Newman Press, 1946), 68.

<sup>17</sup> Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies*, as quoted in Mike Aquilina, *The Mass of the Early Christians* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2001), 92.

## Closer Than You Think

Just before beginning the “little apocalypse” of Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus laments over Jerusalem: “Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Mt. 23:38–39).

The citizens of Jerusalem did not discern the body and blood of our Lord when He came, and so they brought judgment upon themselves. This is a sobering thought for a generation that faces a “crisis” in faith in the Real Presence.

Yet the crisis is not necessarily the one that’s reflected in survey data. It’s a crisis we must all face. Saint Paul’s words should remind us that our generation, and every generation, must face the same choice between blessing and judgment, whenever we present ourselves for Holy Communion.

Our Lord promised: “You will not see Me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’”—that is, until the parousia. How right it is for the Church to place those words, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” on our lips just moments before the Eucharistic consecration in the Mass, just moments before our Lord’s Eucharistic parousia.

If our generation does lack faith in the Eucharist, I think we would profit most from a recovery of the biblical teaching on the sacrament and on the parousia, especially as it is reflected in the *Catechism*.

As Catholics, we must dare to take Jesus at His word and accept His promises on His terms. He promised us a glorious kingdom within His own generation—and, even today, we boldly proclaim that He made good on that promise. For all time, He has established His Eucharistic kingdom, the Church.

What Jesus promised and what He delivered are one and the same. He said He was coming soon—and He is! He said the kingdom is near—and it is. It’s as near as your local parish, where the King reigns in the Eucharist. O come, let us adore Him!

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