

Belief in Eucharist lives



Father John Dietzen

Question Corner

Q. Several times I have heard speakers tell us that most Catholics don't believe in the Eucharist anymore. They say it is because priests do not urge old and young parishioners to be reverent and especially because Catholic education classes do not teach true doctrine.

Is that true? Do surveys really prove that? (Pennsylvania)

A. I've heard the same claims, more several years ago than now. I too find such accusations hard to accept. In my 50 years as a priest, I have certainly experienced nothing to support them.

Schools in every parish I have worked with or known of are clear and thoroughly Catholic in their teaching about the Eucharist. There is always unevenness and need for improvement in education, including religious education. These broad accusations, however, undermining and defaming Catholic schools, contribute nothing helpful to the faith and life of Catholic people.

As for surveys, I'm not at all sure they indicate a decline in eucharistic faith. There were no such surveys in earlier times to measure against.

Second, I have read a few of these studies. They prove that it is impossible to capsule our eucharistic beliefs in a few brief questions that people could answer without leaving room for serious confusions.

It took the church centuries to develop satisfactory eucharistic language. The Council of Trent summarized that development in describing the true and substantial eucharistic presence of our Lord. Even that language is being refined and clarified to this day, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* demonstrates.

Our belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ — "body and blood, soul and divinity," as the older catechisms put it — needs to be carefully understood. It can be, and often has been, misinterpreted. Even to the present

time, people not of our faith sometimes mistake what we mean by eating the body of Christ, seeing it as implying some sort of cannibalism.

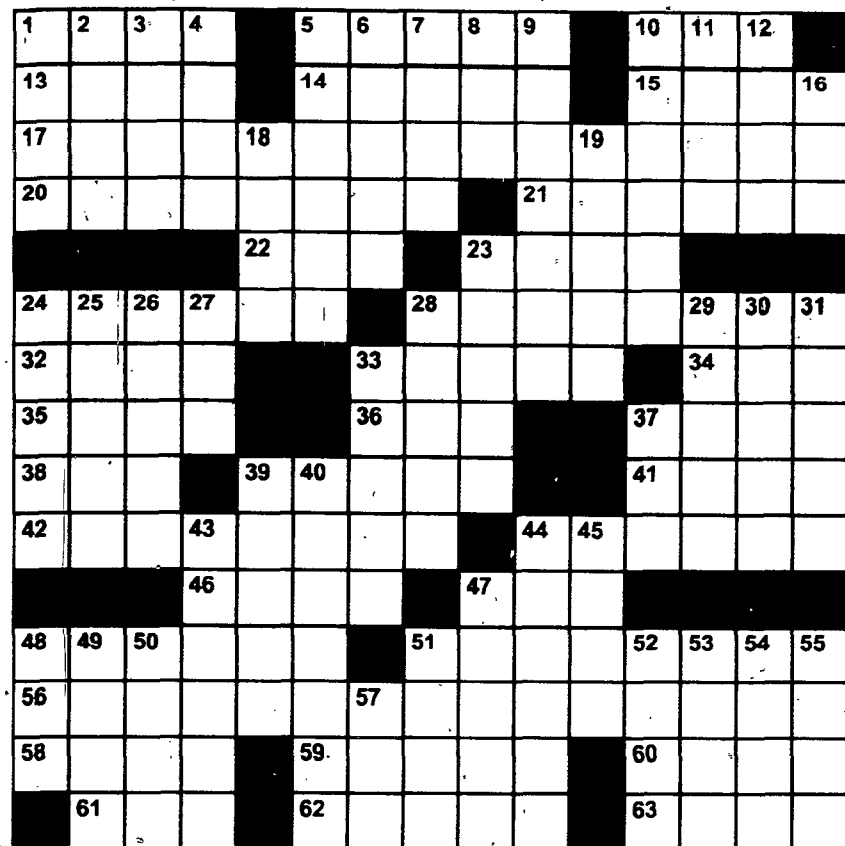
Thoughtful Catholics may not know all the technical theological terminology, but they know what they believe. They tend to be cautious of language that could be open to a caricature of our faith. We are dealing here with a profound mystery which no human words will ever adequately express.

Finally, some Catholics feel a need to deplore what they see as a crisis of faith so they can lay the blame on whatever it is they dislike in the church: English liturgy, women lecturers, celibate priesthood and so on.

Various factors always affect the quality of people's faith — in the Eucharist as in everything else. Fortunately, the Eucharistic Prayers at Mass express plainly what the Eucharist is and why. When the words of consecration, the calling down of the Holy Spirit and the expressions of thanksgiving, are proclaimed clearly and listened to carefully the true faith is present and alive.

The faithful declare quite well what they believe after being offered "the body of Christ" by saying "Amen" — I affirm it.

Father Dietzen is a columnist for Catholic News Service. Questions may be sent to him at Box 325, Peoria, IL 61651 or to jjdietzen@aol.com.



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Catholic Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 A half gainer
5 Judges
10 Drain
13 "Here I am, Lord; _____
I, Lord? I have heard
you calling in the night"
14 Having wings
15 French ones
17 13th century Doctor of
the Church
20 Poverty, _____ and obe-
dience
21 Disturbs
22 Golf accouterment
23 Garden tools
24 Biblical judge who
brought the house down
28 "Your _____," form of
address for a cardinal
32 Swear
33 It's as _____ as it is wide
34 Priest's garb
35 Clears
36 Waterfall in Scotland
37 Amo, _____, amat
38 King of Judah
39 Growing old
41 Actor who played lead
role in the movie, "King
David"
42 "Your _____," form of
address for the pope
44 What Sarah was
46 "Lamb of God, You take
away the _____ of the
world..."
47 Not agin
48 Her dance cost John the

DOWN

- 1 Compact _____
2 Land surrounded on
three sides by water
(abbr.)
3 Brief biographical
resume of one's career
4 Biblical endings (King
James Version)
5 Saint of Molokai
6 Make happy
7 "... for my yoke is _____
and my burden light."
(Mt 11:30)
8 Boston railway co.
9 Large Californian tree
10 Swiss in Paris
11 The Blessed Mother's
mother
12 Type of moss or bog
16 Draft Brd.
18 Successor of
Charlemagne
19 Drastically affect a repu-

- tation
23 People of Southeast
Asia
24 Abraham's wife
25 A dispatch boat
26 Miraculous _____
27 Members of a rel. order
28 St. Patrick's _____ Isle
29 One who appoints
30 Sainly friend of Francis
of Assisi
31 Actor Buddy
33 Joy
37 Farming (abbr.)
39 Soul
40 _____ code
43 Kind of nuclear com-
pound
44 French beauties
45 Woody's son
47 Famed naval officer,
Andrew Hull _____
48 Wind dir.
49 Down under (abbr.)
50 Alphabet string
51 _____ of the Lord
52 Double curve
53 Type of open spaces
54 1149 to Caesar
55 Sign outside a greasy
spoon
57 What 18D ruled (abbr.)

Answers on page B6 (No. 39)



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