

Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)

Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel
Montgomery Alabama
10:45 A.M.
Only on First Sunday
of each month

Cullman Alabama
Every Sunday
6:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M.
6:00 A.M. Daily
Holy Days
6:00 A.M.; 8:00 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

St. Pius V Chapel
9:30 A.M.
Every Sunday except
First Sunday of each month

(St Francis of Assisi Chapel)

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 16, 2000 - - - Green

Mass of Sunday - Gl. Cr. Pref Trin.

Weekly Bulletin # 625

Question A priest at our Midwestern parish spoke disparagingly in a homily about a man who believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. I told him I was confused by what he said. Father said the man believed in the physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist - the same Christ Who walked the earth two thousand years ago. He called such thinking "resuscitation" and said that the Church doesn't believe in it. He also called it "Protestant fundamentalism." I said, "I still don't understand. Basic catechism taught me that Christ is truly present: body, blood, soul and divinity under the appearance of bread." He told me that Christ is spiritually present in the Eucharist. I pursued again, "And what about His physical presence?" Father brought up resuscitation again and warned me about being too "literal," like people who spend hours at Eucharist adoration "as if Christ was truly present right before their eyes." When I reached home, I pulled out The Catholic Catechism by Fr. Hardon and searched for "resuscitation" without success. However, under the real presence, I read about Ratramnus' condemned writings which sounded just like Father's explanation of the Eucharist. I can pray for him and our parish, but is there something more I should do? Should I write to our Bishop? What do you recommend?

Answer: Strictly speaking, according to the precise theological terminology of the Church, Christ is neither *physically* nor *spiritually* present in the Eucharist. He is *sacramentally* present, and sacramental presence is every bit as real as "physical" presence. There is a sacramental presence of Christ in the other sacraments too, but only in the Eucharist is this presence substantial. That is, the host we see, or receive, *is* Christ. He is not "in" the bread in some vague fashion. There is no bread. The Council of Trent officially taught that the Lord is "truly," "really" and "substantially" present in the Eucharist.

Father may have gotten his theology confused somewhere without realizing it. In fairness to him — and to Ratramnus, who may not have intended to say what people understood — sometimes it's a case of inadequate terminology rather than defective faith. It is true that we do not believe in "resuscitation." Jesus did not come back to life the way Lazarus did. We believe in *resurrection* — that Jesus was given an even more powerful and marvelous life by the Father. If His presence were merely *physical* and historical, in the sense it was two thousand years ago in Galilee and Judea, He would be present only in one place at any given time. If His presence were merely *spiritual* we would either be talking about a vague intentional presence ("Sorry I can't make your wedding but I'll be there in spirit") or about a presence that ruled out the "body and blood" but retained the "soul and divinity."

It is precisely His new and unique mode of existence, which we call His "risen life," that makes it possible for Jesus to be truly present to us in the Eucharist in many different places and times. So those who spend hours before Him "as though Christ was truly present right before their eyes" are quite right. He is.

I might add that Christ's real presence is not limited to the Eucharist, as the words from Pope Paul VI quoted below by the *Catechism* imply. Because Christ "has risen from the dead and lives today among his followers" (this is what we believe), He is also present in His word, among His followers and in the events of our lives. However, His Eucharistic presence surpasses all of these other modes of presence.