

Thanksgiving: Encountering Christ in the Eucharist

The second Monday of October is Thanksgiving Day - a special time when we pause to recognize and give thanks for the many blessings we have received throughout the past year. It is a time to gather with family and friends, enjoy the gifts of creation, and express our gratitude for all that God has given us.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving this year, may we remember that our greatest reason for giving thanks is God Himself. This Thanksgiving weekend, let us take a moment to slow down, pray, and reflect on the blessings in our lives. As Catholic Christians, we are especially invited to come together for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist - the Mass or Divine Liturgy. The word *Eucharist* comes from the Greek word meaning “thanksgiving.” When we gather around the altar, we lift up our hearts in gratitude to God and receive Jesus Christ, who gives Himself to us as the Bread of Life.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us: “It is called: Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God.” (CCC 1328) The Eucharist teaches us that thanksgiving is more than simply saying “thank you.” It is recognizing that everything we have and everything we are is ultimately a gift from God.

This Thanksgiving, we give thanks for so many blessings: the gift of faith, our Edmonton Catholic schools and communities, our teachers and staff, our families and friends, those who care for us and those entrusted to our care. We give thanks for the beauty of creation, for the opportunities we have been given, and for the peace and security we experience in our country. Above all, we give thanks for God's loving presence in our lives.

As we come to the Eucharistic Banquet, we can ask ourselves an important question: Who do we meet in Christ? In Christ, we meet God. Jesus reveals to us the Father's love. He shows us who God is and, at the same time, helps us discover who we are called to become. Jesus tells us, “*Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (Matthew 5:48). This does not mean that we will never make mistakes. Rather, it is an invitation to allow God's grace to transform our hearts so that we may become more loving, compassionate, forgiving, generous, and holy.

Every day we are invited to choose Christ and to allow Him to be at the centre of our lives. When we say “yes” to Jesus, we open our hearts to His light, His mercy, His forgiveness, His peace, and His joy. At the Transfiguration, the Father gives us a simple and profound message: “This is my beloved Son; listen to him!” (Mark 9:7) These words are also meant for us today. In a world filled with many voices competing for our attention, Jesus invites us to listen to Him - to His Word, to His Gospel, and to the voice of love that calls us to care for God and for one another.

And who is this Jesus? He is not simply a teacher or an example from history. He is the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour: “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God... Through him all things were made.”

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, may we recognize the many gifts God has placed in our lives and, above all, may we recognize the greatest gift of all: Jesus Christ, who gives Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist. May this Thanksgiving be a time of gratitude, prayer, family, and renewed faith. May our hearts be filled with thanksgiving, and may we share God's blessings with those around us, especially those who may be lonely, struggling, or in need.

Happy Thanksgiving! May God bless you, your families, and our entire Catholic school community with His love, peace, and joy.

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