



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In my prayer the last few days, I have been convicted to write this short letter to you. Our hearts are grieved whenever and wherever the Eucharist is blasphemed, whether that is on the world stage, in the media, by the actions of others, or even by our own actions that deny the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Yet we know that “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20), and so by a providential grace, the whole world now finds itself talking about the Last Supper – the central moment in human history when Jesus instituted the Eucharist. While Jesus is present to us in many ways, it is in the Eucharistic species – bread and wine changed into the true Body and Blood of Christ – that he most intimately abides in us: “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them” (John 6:56).

Jesus speaks to each one of us in a deeply intimate and personal way at the Last Supper – words repeated at the consecration in every Mass – “This is my body, which is given for YOU. Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Jesus gives himself to each of us in personal and profound intimacy so that we may be transformed from within more and more into his likeness to go out into the world as living tabernacles to help build a civilization of love.

In our own diocese we are seeing powerful transformations happening through increased devotion to Eucharistic Adoration. Where Jesus is adored in the Eucharist, hearts are being healed and lives renewed. Recently, more than 80 youth and chaperones from our diocese participated in the Steubenville Atlantic Conference in Halifax where hundreds of young people gave their lives to Jesus and encountered him powerfully during Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Saturday evening and again in heartfelt intimate communion in the celebration of the Sunday Mass. We do not need to look far for Eucharistic miracles – miracles happen wherever and whenever people come before Christ’s Real Presence with open hearts.

St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that “to love is to will the good of the other”. C.S. Lewis adds that “love is not affectionate feeling, but a steady wish for the loved person's ultimate good as far as it can be obtained.” The Eucharist is known as the sacrament of love. In every Mass, we re-present the one and only sacrifice of love made by Jesus on the cross who died for our sins and rose from the dead so that we might live with him for all. We are truly a Eucharistic people when we love sacrificially, imitating Christ’s love and giving of ourselves so that

others might come to experience God's love and mercy through our actions and our words. If you have been transformed by a powerful encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist, I encourage you to share your story with the people around you. Invite others to encounter him at Mass or in Adoration. Your witness will help others come to know Jesus and the hope that he promises.

In light of recent events, might I extend another invitation? In the week ahead, please join me in making reparation and praying for the souls of those who blaspheme the Eucharist through their ignorance of the truth and beauty of Jesus' self-gift of Love and his True Presence among us. One way to do this is to attend a daily Mass in addition to your Lord's Day Mass.

Please also consider making a Holy Hour in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at some point in the next week. Spend time at Jesus' feet asking forgiveness for those who have offended God and for the times we have offended him ourselves. The Institute for Ministry at St. Vincent Seminary has a beautiful [Litany of Healing and Repentance in the Eucharist](#) that I invite you to pray with in Jesus' Presence.

If you have never spent time in Adoration before, I encourage you to meet Jesus there this week and allow him to minister to your heart. My deepest hope is that the whole diocese would come closer to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus and be transformed in his merciful love.

Let us invoke the powerful intercession of Mary, Mother of God, in praying that the whole world will know the gift of Jesus' saving love in the power of the Eucharist and become Christ's intentional and missionary disciples.

United in prayer with Jesus and Mary,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Riesbeck".

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

August 1, 2024