

# To Gaze on the Eucharist

We need to be active participants in building up the Body of Christ

By Bishop David J. Bonnar



The National Eucharistic Revival has begun. This three-year initiative portends to be a grace-filled time in which we as a Church grow in reverence and appreciation of the real presence of Jesus in the holy Eucharist. As priests, we have a special responsibility to assist in this effort. Since it is our honor to confect the holy Eucharist at the holy Mass, we priests cannot be mere spectators of this effort. We need to be active participants in building up the Body of Christ.

In a letter to priests dated March 28, 2004, Pope St. John Paul II stated, “There can be no Eucharist without priesthood, just as there can be no priesthood without the Eucharist.” The Eucharist and the priesthood are inextricably linked. That said, the Eucharistic Revival is incomplete without a priesthood revival.

During this month, our presbyterate will be gathering for an overnight to begin the process of a priestly revival that will only serve to enhance the Eucharistic Revival. Spending time together in prayer and fraternity coupled with a keynote speaker, along with three witness talks from our own priests representing different generations, promises to bring new life into the presbyterate by renewing our priesthood.

Much like the Eucharistic Revival begins with a procession with Our Lord, we priests of all ages need to be intentional about processing to one another if we are to embrace a true priestly revival. None of us can afford to be Lone Rangers and live our priesthood apart from the bishop, presbyterate, religious superior and/or community. We are all in this together.

The word “revive” is often used in healthcare. A patient is revived when their heart stops. A doctor or healthcare professional can revive a person’s quality of life or state of mind.

As priests, we are not immune to these conditions in need of attention. For example, our priestly hearts can stop or go out of rhythm as a result of hurt or disillusionment. Our state of mind can become jaded and even numb. In our woundedness, we can become paralyzed and feel alone.

The Eucharistic Revival is an opportune time for all of us priests to become revived — body, mind, heart and soul. If we are not right in any of these areas, now is the time to seek to revive our priesthood. There are simple ways in which we can do this — a day off, vacation, continuing formation, retreat, spiritual direction, confession, quality

time with brother priests and friends, a change in assignment. Indeed, these are all-powerful and effective means toward healing and rebirth. But there are other constructive ways for us to be revitalized in our priesthood. How is God calling you to intentionally revive your own priesthood?

Much of this Eucharistic Revival will begin with the eyes and how we look at Jesus in the Host, the monstrance, tabernacle or one another. Like those two disciples who encountered the stranger on the road to Emmaus and invited him to come into their place to break bread, let us pray that in the same breaking of the bread our “eyes will be opened” to truly see Jesus in the holy Eucharist.

At the same time, let us together pray that our hearts will be opened to behold and embrace the mystery of our priesthood and to see it and value it with new eyes and a renewed zeal. Mindful of who and whose we are, may we aspire to realize all that God wants us to become for him and his Church.

On the day of our priestly ordination, we promised: “To celebrate the mysteries of Christ reverently and faithfully according to the tradition of the Church, especially in the Sacrifice of the Eucharist.” As the bishop placed the paten and chalice into our hands, he said, “Receive the oblation of the holy people to be offered to God. Understand what you will do, imitate what you will celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord’s Cross.”

Perhaps as we enter into this Eucharistic Revival we can revive our priesthood by gazing at a photo each day from our ordination day to renew the promises we made and the gift we received.

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*Father Robinson Olivares receives a chalice and paten from Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn, N.Y., during his ordination to the priesthood June 5, 2021, at the Co-Cathedral of St. Joseph in Brooklyn. Father Olivares, who was born in the Dominican Republic, was one of four men ordained by Bishop DiMarzio at the Mass. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)*