

THE BEST FAMILY MEAL THIS SUMMER... IS WAITING FOR YOU

Summer in Michigan has a beautiful rhythm. Many of us pack our bags and head "Up North." Some travel to the Upper Peninsula, others to cottages by the lakes, while many gather for family reunions where grandparents, parents, children, cousins, and friends sit around one table. There is something almost sacred about sharing a meal together. Stories are told again (even the ones we've all heard before!), laughter fills the air, recipes are compared, and someone always insists they don't want dessert—until dessert arrives. Family meals remind us that we belong.

Our Lord Jesus understood this longing long before we did.

On the night before He died, He did not simply give us good advice or leave us a farewell speech. He invited us to His table. "**Take and eat... Take and drink.**" Then He made an astonishing promise: "**I am with you always, until the end of the age**" (Mt. 28:20). Every celebration of the Holy Eucharist is a family reunion—not merely remembering Jesus but encountering Him, alive and present among His people.

Christians throughout history have cherished these words, though they have understood them differently.

Some believe that Christ is truly present "with" the bread and wine in a mysterious sacramental union called '*consubstantiation*'. Others believe that Christ becomes truly present spiritually through the faith of the believer and the action of the Holy Spirit during Communion called '*Pneumatic spiritualism*'. Still others see the Lord's Supper primarily as a sacred memorial which is called '*Memorialism*', a profound act of remembering Christ's sacrifice and proclaiming His saving death.

The Catholic Church, however, has consistently professed what is called "**Transubstantiation**". At the words of consecration spoken by the priest, the substance of bread and wine is completely changed into the **Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ**, while the appearances of bread and wine remain. It is not merely symbolic. It is not only spiritual. It is not Christ alongside the bread. **It is Christ Himself**. The same Jesus born of Mary, crucified on Calvary, risen from the tomb, and reigning in glory is truly, really, and substantially present in the **Holy Eucharist**.

That is why every Catholic church has a *tabernacle*.

The tabernacle is not simply another piece of church furniture. It is the dwelling place of the King. It is the "tent" where Emmanuel—God with us—continues His earthly presence. The

word *tabernacle* itself means "dwelling place." Just as God dwelt among Israel in the Old Testament tabernacle, Christ now dwells sacramentally among His people in the Blessed Sacrament. It is rightly called the heart of every Catholic church because it is where the Eucharistic Lord remains with His people outside of Mass.

For this reason, the sanctuary is not simply a stage, nor is the altar merely a table. The altar is Calvary and the banquet table united. The sanctuary is holy ground because it is ordered toward the mystery of Christ's abiding presence. Whenever we enter church, our first greeting should be directed not to the priest, not to our friends, but to Jesus in the tabernacle. A simple genuflection or profound bow (for who cannot genuflect because of health, age, or other reasons) silently says, "**Lord, I know You are here.**"

The early Christians believed this with extraordinary conviction. **St. Ignatius of Antioch**, writing around A.D. 107, called the Eucharist "*the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ.*" **St. Justin Martyr** taught that the *Eucharistic food is no ordinary bread or drink.* **St. Cyril of Jerusalem** instructed believers *to approach Holy Communion with profound reverence.* **St. John Chrysostom** preached that *we adore Christ in the Eucharist just as the Magi adored Him in Bethlehem.* **St. Thomas Aquinas** beautifully summarized centuries of faith: "*Sight, touch, and taste are all deceived in their judgment of You, but hearing suffices firmly to believe.*" From the earliest centuries, Catholics knelt before the Eucharistic Lord because they recognized that the One hidden under the appearance of bread is truly the Son of God.

History is filled with moments when faith in the Eucharist strengthened the Church in times of persecution, inspired conversions, nourished missionaries, and sustained countless saints. Eucharistic processions have been held during plagues and wars, asking God's mercy. Saints such as **Tarcisius** gave their lives protecting the Blessed Sacrament. Countless Eucharistic miracles have renewed faith in Christ's Real Presence. Wherever Jesus is adored, hearts are changed, vocations flourish, families are healed, and hope is restored.

How blessed we are in the Diocese of Saginaw to have the Eucharistic Lord living among us every day! What an extraordinary gift that both **St. Peter Parish, Chesaning**, and **St. Cyril Parish, Bannister**, together with all our parish communities, have the Real Presence of Christ dwelling in our tabernacles. We never have to travel to Jerusalem to find Jesus. He is waiting only a few miles from home.

This summer, as you gather around picnic tables, campfires, restaurant booths, and family dining rooms, remember that the greatest family meal is celebrated every Sunday—and every day—at the altar. Every Mass is Heaven touching earth. Every tabernacle is a reminder that Jesus kept His promise: "***I am with you always.***"

And if you happen to be heading Up North, don't forget something important: Jesus doesn't take a summer holiday! (The fish may be biting, but the Lord is always inviting.)

We warmly invite you to celebrate Mass faithfully each weekend and, whenever possible, during the week. We especially encourage you to spend time with Our Eucharistic Lord during **Eucharistic Adoration every Thursday following the 8:30 a.m. Mass until 10:00 a.m.**, with the Sacrament of Reconciliation available during Adoration.

Come and sit with Him.

The best conversations happen around the family table—and the greatest Host is always waiting.

As we gather this summer for family reunions and meals, we also look forward to the **50th Annual Czechoslovakian Harvest Festival in Bannister** on **Sunday, August 2**. The celebration fittingly begins with the **Heritage Mass at St. Cyril at 10:30 a.m.**, followed by the traditional Czech dinner (**11:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m.**), opening ceremonies and folk dancing (**2:30 p.m.**), and an outdoor street dance (**4:00 p.m.**). Before we enjoy kolaches, music, dancing, and fellowship, we first gather at the Lord's Table to receive the Bread of Life. Festivals come and go, but in the tabernacle Christ remains, faithfully waiting to welcome us to the family meal that never ends.

This summer, whether you're heading Up North, gathering around the family table, or celebrating at the Harvest Festival, don't forget the greatest family reunion of all: the Eucharistic feast, where Christ Himself is both our Host and our Food, waiting for us in the tabernacle.

"Taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34:8)

Fr. Vincent Oguejiofor
(Your new priest in town)