

The Newsletter of the Dominican Friars Foundation



BLACKFRIARS

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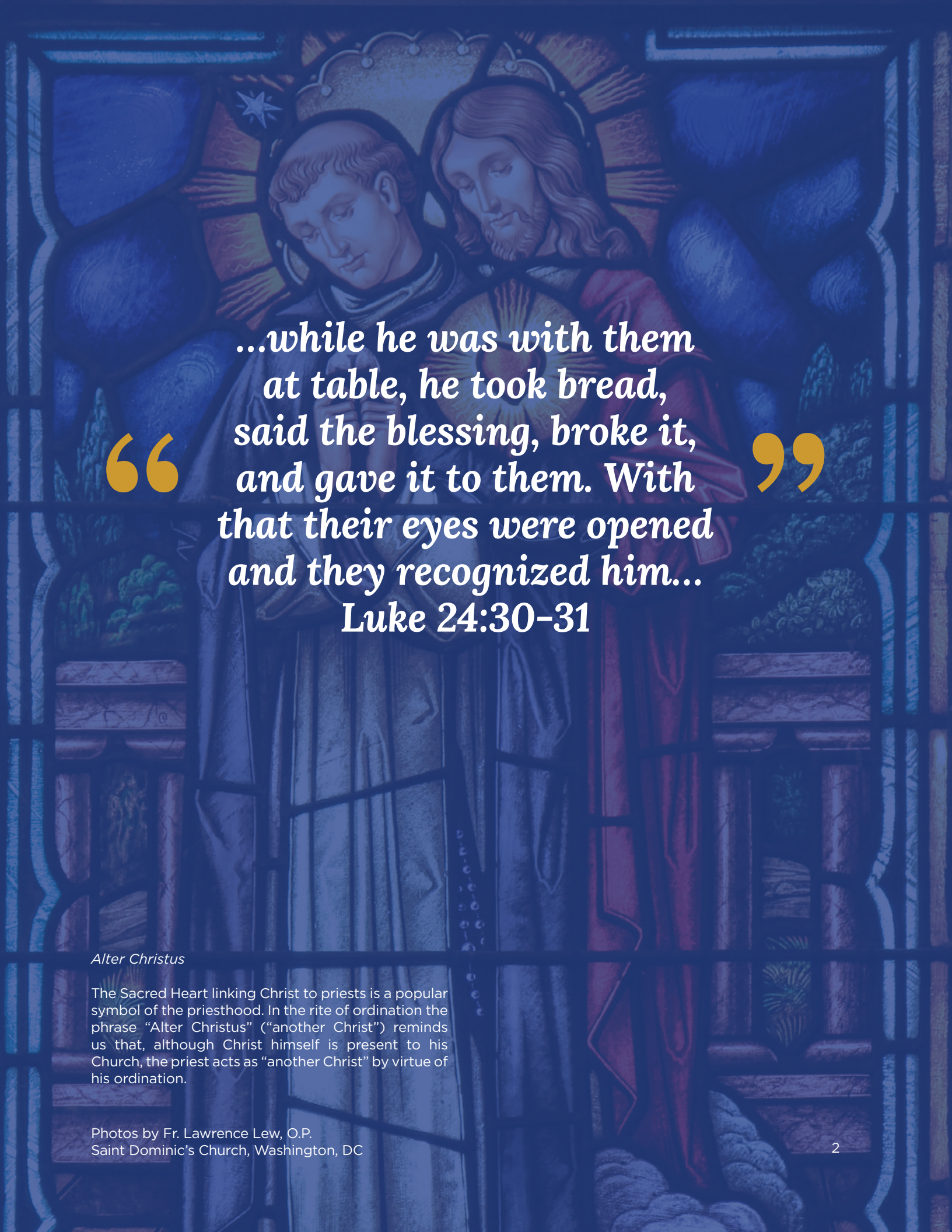
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Since our origins in 1216, the Dominican Friars are found in the midst of the cultural centers of the world, always preaching Jesus Christ. Photo by Jeffrey Bruno.

Volume X, Issue II



“...while he was with them
at table, he took bread,
said the blessing, broke it,
and gave it to them. With
that their eyes were opened
and they recognized him...
Luke 24:30-31”

Alter Christus

The Sacred Heart linking Christ to priests is a popular symbol of the priesthood. In the rite of ordination the phrase “Alter Christus” (“another Christ”) reminds us that, although Christ himself is present to his Church, the priest acts as “another Christ” by virtue of his ordination.



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends in Christ,

The Priesthood and the Eucharist are among the most precious gifts through which Jesus gives himself to us for our salvation.

The US bishops have called for the Church in our country to a renewed focus on Jesus Christ in the Eucharist—the source and summit of Christian life—by organizing a 3-year Eucharistic Revival. This is a response, in part, to the alarming findings of a recent Pew poll that found that 50% of Catholics and 75% of young Catholics in the US doubt the true presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

Six of our Dominican Friars have been appointed to serve as National Eucharistic Preachers to support the Eucharistic Revival. In this capacity, they will preach throughout the country to foster faith in the amazing reality that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist—body, blood, soul, and divinity.

The Dominican Friars place the Eucharist at the center of our preaching and ministry. I had the privilege of participating with several of our friars in a Eucharistic Procession down Fifth Avenue in New York City to celebrate and give public witness to our faith in the Eucharist. After opening a new Eucharistic Adoration chapel in the University of Louisville campus ministry last fall, we are now preparing to open the first Adoration chapel for Perpetual Adoration in Manhattan—giving 24/7 access to pray in the presence of our Eucharistic Lord—at our St. Joseph’s Church. These examples are characteristic of our Eucharist-centered life, preaching, and ministry.

Without the priesthood there is no Eucharist. We were excited and grateful to recently celebrate the ordination of nine new Dominican priests on May 20, in Washington, DC, who are now out serving in the Lord’s vineyard, providing the Eucharist to nourish the lives of the faithful. Three of our friars at the Dominican House of Studies were among the speakers at a recent North American theological conference on the priesthood at the Catholic University of America and Fr. Ezra Sullivan, O.P., wrote a book on the priest as *Alter Christus* or “another Christ.”

Thank you for your continued prayers and support for our formation programs. Without your support and participation in our Dominican mission we would not be able to continue to prepare the young men God is sending us to serve as Dominican priests, providing the Eucharist to the people of God, faithfully teaching, and boldly preaching the saving truth of Jesus Christ for the salvation of souls. We are so grateful to you.

In the Priestly Heart of Jesus Christ,

Fr. John Paul Kern, O.P.
Executive Director
Dominican Friars Foundation



NINE MEN GIVE THEIR LIVES TO JESUS CHRIST

Your generosity continues to bear fruit! Nine men, who were formed over the past seven years, were ordained to the priesthood on Saturday, May 20, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC: from left: Fr. Vincent Bernhard, O.P., Fr. Michael Donahue, O.P., Fr. Dominic Koester, O.P., Fr. Zachary Sexton, O.P., Fr. Brendan Baran, O.P., Fr. Columba Thomas, O.P., Fr. Nicholas Hartman, O.P., Fr. Juan Macias Marquez, O.P., Fr. Raymond La Grange, O.P.

Since St. Dominic founded his Order of Preachers 800 years ago, the Dominican Friars have answered the Lord's call by preaching for the salvation of souls. Today, the Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Joseph are arguably the best equipped group of men in the American Catholic Church to preach the truth to a culture that has forgotten there is even a truth to be known.

Presently, we have over 50 men in formation. Your continued generosity helps to form these men for the important work the Lord has called them—to make an offering of himself and lead souls to heaven.



“The beautiful liturgies and powerful preaching of the Dominicans drew me to the Order and the priesthood. As I came to know the Dominicans better, I realized that we are uniquely positioned to effectively proclaim the Gospel and give witness to the faith in a very secularized world.”

Fr. Columba Thomas, O.P.



“What drew me to the Dominican life was our common life—praying together, working together, relaxing together. I think hearing the friars chanting the Divine Office was what really drew me to seriously consider a vocation in the first place. I want to give myself wholly to Jesus and to serve the Church as his priest, and I can’t imagine a better way to do this than with the support of my brothers in St. Dominic.”

Fr. Dominic Koester, O.P.

“Every man must choose where he will make the oblation of his life. How will he spend his life? What is the worthy way he will sacrifice his life? The Lord Jesus Christ stoked in my heart a zeal for the salvation of souls by preaching his Word. Under the guidance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I found my Dominican brothers and the example of Holy Father Dominic as the models of sacrificial love. Praise God that I may be worthy to follow them.”

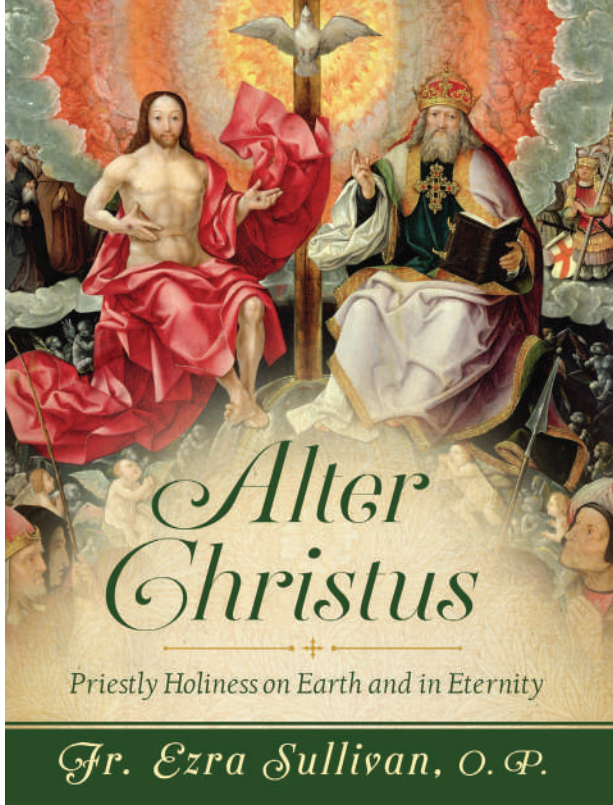
Fr. Zachary Sexton, O.P.



“It has always been quite clear to me that it was God himself who drew me to the priesthood. His intimate calls early on in my life showed me the beauty of being conformed to Christ in a special way so as to participate in his saving mission. When I met the Dominicans and learned about St. Dominic and the Order’s many saints, I knew almost instantly that Jesus was asking me to be a priest in the particular way of St. Dominic by preaching the Gospel with joy in a fraternity of men consecrated to God.”

Fr. Juan Macias Marquez, O.P.





ALTER CHRISTUS

By *BlackFriars* Staff

In the last chapter of his new book, *Alter Christus, Priestly Holiness on Earth and In Eternity*, Fr. Ezra Sullivan, O.P., paints a picture of what the eternal rewards for holy priests will be—and it is a vision worth reading.

Quoting Ven. Archbishop Fulton Sheen, he writes there are two approaches we can take in life, “first the party, then the hangover; or first the fast, then the feast.” Everyone ought to begin with the fast, that is, a life of sacrifice so he can enjoy the rewards of the banquet in heaven—but especially the priest.

Fr. Ezra, a professor at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas in Rome (the Angelicum), wrote this book to help priests live out their call as “another Christ” on earth. But it’s also a great resource for everyone, including the laity, to understand the basics of holiness, as well as the priesthood.

The goal of all of our lives is God, Fr. Ezra reminds us. That means we need to be friends with God in this life. “To love God as a friend means finding joy in talking to him, pleasure in being in his presence, contentment in learning from him, readiness to sacrifice yourself for him, and great sadness if you were ever separated from him.” Priests

are called to God’s inner circle, Fr. Ezra explains, so that they can be of service—and should be so close to Christ that when you see the priest, you see Christ.

In this last chapter of his book, Fr. Ezra describes what heaven will be like for priests. In heaven, not only will a priest be given the vision of the Holy Trinity, he will experience deeper union with Mary, St. Joseph, the angels, and the saints!

The priest will now recognize Mary “more fully as his own spiritual mother... he will be pierced with joy as she tells him that, as an *alter Christus*, she will forever look upon his priestly soul with the special love that she has for her own son, the Great High Priest.”

He tells us that the priest will also know her earthly spouse, St. Joseph. “In heaven, the priest will finally be able to penetrate the mystery of St. Joseph, and learn about the innumerable silent ways [he] protected the Church—and the little priest—from so many spiritual and physical dangers.” Fr. Ezra reminds us that St. Joseph was not only the guardian of Christ, he was the priest’s guardian too!

The angels and saints are part of this reward too. Fr. Ezra points to Bl. Fra Angelico’s painting of a Dominican friar meeting his guardian angel for the first time, embracing one another, smiling, as if to say, “at last, we’ve made it.” And the priest will meet his patron saints “and he will join them in laughter and mirth as he considers their watchful and intercessory role, how they continually aided his ministry and private life despite his bungling and stumbling ways.”

This book for priests, and about the priesthood, matters for a few reasons. First, Fr. Ezra has written this book for all his brother priests to remind them of their high call, to keep striving for the goal of God himself. The book gives priests concrete ways to live this out and what pitfalls to be aware of. But it’s more than a manual for priests. *Alter Christus* opens up a window to the eternal for all of us, giving us glimpses of heavenly realities that sometimes seem too abstract to us or shrouded in mystery. This book is just one example of how Dominican friars are living out the priestly role of bridging heaven and earth.

To order your copy, visit sophiainstitute.com



THE THEOLOGY OF PRIESTHOOD

By *BlackFriars Staff*



Three Dominican friars participated in a one-day symposium, *Toward a Fundamental Theology of the Priesthood*, recently held at The Catholic University of America. The conference, whose audience was primarily priests, bishops, and seminarians, was organized by the Thomistic Institute, the Centre de Recherche et d'Anthropologie des Vocations, the Institute for Human Ecology, and Theological College.

Fr. Thomas Petri, O.P., President of the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception at the Dominican House of Studies; Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P., Associate Professor of Patristics and Director of the doctoral program; and Fr. Dominic Legge, O.P., Director of the Thomistic Institute and Associate Professor of Dogmatic Theology were among the speakers for this

conference, which also included presentations by Archbishop Timothy Broglio, President of the USCCB, and Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Prefect Emeritus of the Dicastery of Bishops.

The impetus for the conference was to continue, in an American context, the conversation begun by the International Theological Symposium on the Priesthood, which was organized by Cardinal Ouellet and held at the Vatican in February 2022. The aim of the conference is to find the horizon of the priesthood in its two forms of participation, baptismal and ministerial, and to elaborate the dignity and complementarity of each sacramental vocation—marriage, ministerial priesthood, and consecrated life—within the Church and civil society.



In the United States today, we can't talk enough about the wonderful riches of the priesthood, as instituted by Christ in its two forms – the priesthood of all believers and the ministerial priesthood. Jesus established his apostles as the first bishops and priests, and commanded them to preach, to teach, and to sanctify all of the faithful. As his ministers, that's the goal of this conference: to reflect on how we can continue that mission in the 21st century.

– Fr. Dominic Legge, O.P.

WHAT DISBELIEF REALLY MEANS

By Fr. Philip Nolan, O.P.

This article originally appeared in Dominicana and is reprinted with permission.

Many Catholics don't believe that the Eucharist actually is the Body and Blood of Christ. Some of those Catholics have never been told what the Church teaches. But plenty who do know what the Church teaches still doubt the truth of that teaching. This doubt, it seems to me, raises a much bigger question: Who should you trust?

Perhaps you are one of these Catholics. Your doubt of the Eucharist is understandable. Many American Catholics think the Church is wrong about something: whether science, abortion, contraception. The Eucharist adds just one more belief to a litany of outdated positions.

We are modern Catholics. Yes, we believe in God. But the Eucharist—why is that necessary?

If we are to give the teaching on the Eucharist a fair shot, however, we have to look at the source of the teaching. We have to look at who makes the claim that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ. Like middle-schoolers working on their first research project, we have to learn to discern between trustworthy and untrustworthy sources. An Oxford University Press book? Generally, pretty good. Wikipedia? Less certain. Who is the source for the teaching on the Eucharist?

Now perhaps we think the source is first and foremost the Pope, or maybe the Church. The Church came up with this idea, and we doubt the Church. But this would not be the full truth. Rather—and this is the most important point—God himself is the one who made claims about the Eucharist. Regardless of your belief in the Eucharist, if you identify as Catholic, it's likely that you believe in God. You probably believe that he has our best interests in mind. That he has told us that he wants to be with us. That he sent his Son into the world to die for our sins so that we might live with him eternally. Does he really make the claim that this



bread substantially becomes his Body and Blood?

Let's look at some of the claims God makes about himself. The same God who says "I am the Lord, and there is no other" (Isa 45:5) says "This is my beloved Son, listen to him" (Matt 17:5). And what did God the Son say? He said that he would remain with us always (Matt 28:20). And he not only told us that he would be with us, but he told us how he would be with us: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" (John 6:56).

These truths come from God. He tells them to us. They are trustworthy because he announced them, again and again. And they show a pattern—God becoming more and more present to us in surprising ways.

We put ourselves in a perilous position when we deny claims made by God himself about the Eucharist, claims preserved by the Church in the deposit of faith. Our disbelief suggests that, for us, God's voice is one among many. Just as we may agree with one politician's policy in one matter and someone else's in a different matter, we follow the all-knowing God when it comes to the existence of heaven, but not when it comes to the Eucharist. More importantly, our disbelief in the Real Presence means that we reject God's project of being with us and making us happy, making us saints.

In short, the truths of the faith stand together or fall together because of the one who speaks them. Sure, some of those teachings challenge us more than others. If we doubt, we pray for light—this is normal. But when we realize who is speaking, how can we have any response but faith? We do not begin with understanding. We begin with faith, and then seek understanding. Eventually we might see that his strange assertions are far more believable than our confused doubts.



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For correspondence related to this newsletter, email editor@dominicanfriars.org

Dominican Friars Foundation

141 East 65th Street
New York, NY 10065
Phone: (212) 744-2410



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