



Photo by William Wicks, SFO

Encounter with the Living God

By Francine Gikow, SFO, Staff Editor

Have you ever yearned to see the face of God? Have you ever felt the absence of God? Have you ever pleaded: "Lord, let me see you?"

But we already DO experience Christ in the Eucharist and *see Him* in the blessing of the Bread and Wine! We just don't recognize Him!

*"Why do you not recognize the truth and believe in the Son of God? See,...daily He comes to us in a humble form; daily He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of the priest. And as He appeared to the holy apostles in true flesh, so now He reveals Himself to us in the sacred bread. And as they saw only His flesh by means of their bodily sight, yet believed Him to be God as they contemplated Him with the eyes of faith, so, as we see bread and wine with bodily eyes, we too are to see and firmly believe them to be His most holy Body and Blood living and true. And in this way the Lord is always with His faithful, as He Himself says: Behold I am with you even to the end of the world"*¹

If we really meditated upon Jesus being present in the Eucharist, we would not receive the Body and

Blood so lightly! The reality of this Encounter with our God is unbelievable to us because we know we are not worthy - after all, we are poor and lowly in our sinfulness. But that is the point! We ARE so deeply loved and embraced by a God who loves our lowliness, that He has promised to be with us until the end of the world!

It is through this Encounter that God reveals Himself to us as a living God. This Encounter with Jesus takes place in our daily lives and struggles. God knows us and gently leads us to Him! Our hearts become alive in His love as He dwells in us! We hear His voice and listen to His message of love when we spend time with Him as we receive His Body and Blood. It is an awesome and mighty reality we believe in!

When we receive the Eucharist, it changes us each time we receive Him into our bodies. When we acknowledge the presence of our Lord in the Eucharist, we allow the Encounter to change our own lives. It is our "Yes!" When Jesus comes to us in the Eucharist, we are altered. Christ unites Himself to us and changes us in love. Our lives start to transform. He becomes greater and we grow lesser. Our values and priorities shift. What was, so previously important, pales in comparison to His Presence in our lives now. We bask in His love and want to share it with others. We bring Him with us into our daily work. We become His body on earth for others. We are His Face others can see. It is through us that God is alive to others.

In response to His love, we freely offer ourselves back to Him on the altar. We offer our own personal crosses and sufferings in unity with His sacrifice, each day as we receive His Body. "By virtue of our profession, [we] make ourselves entirely available to God and place [our] own bodies (persons) on the altar of Christ's sacrifice as a holy victim pleasing to God."² We have consecrated ourselves to the living God. In other words, according to Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM, we have written God a blank check!

Our commitment to the Living God is a permanent sacrifice, since our profession is permanent. Our food along this journey is none other than God Himself in the Eucharist! How blessed are we when we carry Him in our hearts and body!

*"Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, since the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and He will make His home and dwelling among them."*³

¹ *Admonitions of St. Francis*, I, 15-22

² Felice Cangelosi OFM Cap "Profession in the SFO: Gift and Commitment." Address to the General Chapter Nov. 15-22, 2008.

³ First Version of the Letter to the Faithful, Chap.1, 5.