



By Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

Carrying the Lord with Us

Sending forth, we join the faithful in taking Jesus to the world

The reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist is at the heart and soul of what it means to be Catholic. The Eucharist is the principal source of strength and nourishment for our souls precisely because it is Christ himself whom we receive. The power of the Eucharistic Christ — present at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in adoration — gives us the perseverance and resolve to stand up to the convictions and truths of our faith: to be the disciples that Christ calls us to be. The Eucharist nourishes the deacon's spiritual life and enlivens his ministry of service.

The deacon is not a volunteer in his service to Christ present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. He is a living, sacramental sign of Christ the servant. To be a guardian of the Eucharist is one of the ways an ordained deacon serves the Church. He can only serve well if he lives a Eucharist-centered faith himself and then shares that gift with those he is called to serve.

For the deacon, the Eucharistic Christ must be at the heart, the core, the very center of his ministerial life. The Blessed Sacrament is the *locus* of unity because the Eucharist exists to make the sacramental representation of Jesus Christ on earth. Our being changed into Christ is what Eucharist is all about.

For deacons, this transformational reality starts in the home and extends to the Church. The service ministry of the deacon is an invitation for others to encounter Christ so that they may share in the sacramental banquet. Evangelization reaches its zenith in consummation — in consuming the word and the Eucharist. Through this eating we become more fully what we already are through baptism: the Body of Christ. This is the beautiful and profound mystery that the deacon helps to facilitate.

It is also critically important that the deacon serves well at Mass, since how we serve at the altar reflects the ministry we ex-

ercise outside of Mass. "In the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the deacon does not celebrate the mystery: rather, he effectively represents on the one hand, the people of God, and, specifically, helps them to unite their lives to the offering of Christ; while on the other, in the name of Christ himself, he helps the Church to participate in the fruits of that sacrifice" (Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons, No. 28).

After sending forth the faithful at the end of Mass, we too must join them in being "Eucharist" to the world. One of the greatest joys we have as deacons is bringing the Eucharistic Christ to those who are homebound, in hospitals, assisted living communities and prisons. They are happy to see you but even happier to see Jesus!

Among his other responsibilities, deacons reserve the Eucharist, bring it as viaticum to the dying, and impart benediction with the Blessed Sacrament during adoration. There is no better place to sit at Jesus' feet as Mary did, or listen to the

Lord's heartbeat as John did, than in Eucharistic adoration.

When we receive Jesus Christ in the Eucharist during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, let us be mindful of the fact that, like Mary, we are carrying the Lord within us; that our bodies are united with his. Let us receive him in a state of grace so that we can say to Our Lord with all of our heart, soul and will: "My God, I love you more than anyone or anything else in this world. I love you so much that I want you to create your life in me. Lord Jesus, in obedience to your will, I renew my vow to offer you my unending love and service as a deacon for your people for the rest of my life." **TD**

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