

Christ Glorified

I joined a new parish after having moved. It was a simple rural church, humbly outfitted, but still a place to find joy in the Eucharist, thanks be to God. The simplicity of the worship space was pronounced the absence of a crucifix hanging above the altar space with no statue of Our Lady or St. Joseph at the sides. As I began to attend weekly Mass, my eyes looked for a place to settle, a place to find the gaze of our loving Lord, and to gaze at him. Thankfully, I found the tabernacle prominently placed behind the altar space just below a beautifully simple stained-glass cross with a dove at its center hovering over the Blessed Sacrament.



It is here in all its simplicity that I found a newness, richness, and depth to the Body of Christ, the fulfillment of the Incarnation. Here I realized that Mary is in and with the glorified Body of Christ, in the tabernacle. She is, after all, a member of his Body. Indeed, all the faithful are right there in the consecrated bread, humbly reserved in the tabernacle; Jesus, his glorified Body, encompassing Mary and all the saints who have gone before us!



The parish has been slowly working on upgrading the physical aspects of its appearance, including a beautiful new wood floor with a cross inlaid where the priest would prostrate himself at special liturgies during the year. How impactful it has been to walk up to this inlaid cross every time I approach the altar to receive the Eucharist! The Eucharist itself far more impactful, but somehow this small added effect brings the Eucharist and the cross together in a more tangible way, as if I am literally stepping up to the cross to die to myself as I receive Christ.

Then, the new statues arrived – Our Lady and St. Joseph holding the child Jesus in his arms. Finally, there was Mary, taking her place at the right hand of Jesus in the tabernacle (on the left), with Joseph on the other side of the altar, offering yet another dimension to contemplate!

Here my eyes found pause to consider the child Jesus in the arms of Joseph, before drifting to the processional crucifix to

contemplate the passion and death of Christ crucified, finally settling on home, the tabernacle where He dwells in all humility, his glorified body to adore and to contemplate, with the Advocate, the Holy Spirit in the stained glass background, proclaiming the words of the Father, *“This is my son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

It was during this time that my mother passed away. Returning home after several months of traveling back and forth to care for my sick mother, then seeing to her memorial services, and finally beginning the difficult process of addressing her worldly



possessions, this altar space brought me a new comfort. The Blessed Sacrament called out to me in a new way. Here, I found a communion with my mother in a way I had never considered before. Like Mary and all the saints, all our brothers and sisters who have passed into eternity are uniquely present to us. And while they have passed through the door to eternity, they continue to await, with us, that eternal home which is our hope and our joy, forever the body of Christ, glorified by God and accomplished by his efficacious and merciful plan! The Mass is now a

greater joy than ever! While Christ is the ultimate joy, knowing the presence of my mother in him shows yet again how merciful is our God!

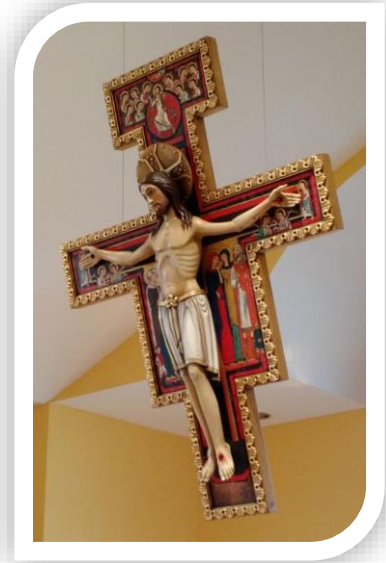
When the parish finally hung a new crucifix above the altar, the San Damiano crucifix in all its ornate and artistic splendor, it almost seemed too much for our humble altar space. But it is the crucifix from which Christ spoke to St. Francis of Assisi, for whom our parish is named, words of rebuilding his church. And so, despite my having grown both accustomed to and appreciative of the simplicity of our altar space, it now hangs prominently attracting our eyes by its color and richness.



Jesus looks all the man, no shadowy figure chiseled into the likeness of human form – Jesus crucified, yet fully alive! Somehow this depiction of Jesus draws me to desire to know him more and more. And thus my journey will continue as I seek the living God with all my heart!

The absence of this central crucifix served a significant purpose on my journey. Its absence brought me to Jesus, hidden in the bread and wine, waiting in the tabernacle for me to seek him out, to gaze on him, and to allow him to enrich my soul with deeper revelation that carried me along my journey. Having been given the grace to contemplate more fully the mystery of Jesus Incarnate, to contemplate his humanity transformed into glory, and the fulfillment of God’s plan in bringing us all unto himself as part of his glorified body has only deepened my love for Jesus, for the Eucharist, and for my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ! May we all arrive home in our Father’s house safely, perhaps wearied from the journey, but with the greatest joy at knowing the unfathomable depths of his love and mercy!

May God be praised for all eternity!



*Reflection by Bernadette Harmon, 2019-Feb
Reviewed by Dr. Mary Healy, STD, STL*