Opinion
Spirituality



by NCR Staff

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The U.S. Catholic bishops are planning a multi-year $28 million national Eucharistic revival to focus on "real presence," leaving certain observers questioning the price tag, the revival's premise and the bishops' motives.

If the bishops are concerned about falling Mass attendance and people leaving the church, I have a suggestion: a survey of the real reasons people leave. As mentioned in the article, only bishops would imagine the big reason is lack of belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

I believed in his presence in the Eucharist when I was an enthusiastic convert in 1983, and I still believed it when I left 33 years later. I still believe it now.



The survey that purported to reveal that only a third of U.S. Catholics accept it was deeply flawed. Christians in the Orthodox and Anglican traditions accept the real presence without expressing it in terms of transubstantiation, which, as I understand it, was the one tradition chosen at the Council of Trent.

Besides, it is not a good look to spend so much money on this endeavor when it is supposedly difficult to scrape up compensation for victims of some priests' perverted sexual appetites.

ELAINE CHILCOTE

Oakmont, Pennsylvania

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I think of all the published catechetical programs, all the retreats and youth gatherings, all the novenas and devotions, the days of recollection, the rosaries, the

Sunday liturgies, the hours of adoration, the sacraments given, the books, videos, CDs, workshops, etc., since the Second Vatican Council and their apparent failure to not only evangelize Catholics and enhance the church, but also the obvious decline in church attendance.

And now the bishops believe a Eucharistic congress, charging $300 to $350 per person to attend when regular church offerings have dwindled and one could go to their local church and receive the same Eucharist and same real presence for a whole lot less, this will restore some kind of belief in the "real presence" of Christ? If after all the education and spiritual programs didn't enhance the faith and expand it, why would this one-time media extravaganza suddenly capture the imagination and thrust attendees into the rapture?

What about all those who cannot attend? How will this rock concert change understanding about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist when their hometown gig seemingly doesn't?

This will be two years in the making. The Eucharist at Mass this morning or this coming Sunday is just as meaningful. Jesus is present. Remember him.

DAVID MURRAY

Cedarville, Michigan

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Loved the story about the upcoming bishops' conference. It is right out of the current playbook of, you name the organization. Have an embarrassing, shameful problem like illegal sexual activities? Dissemble, deny, ignore, do and talk about anything but the "problem."

Dear bishops and cardinals, the pews are empty. No one knows better than pastors how this has diminished the "bottom line" of the majority of parishes across the United States. How about a "Mea Culpa Conference" utilizing the sacrament of penance? Forgiveness is a big part of the Catholic faith. How about a Conference of Confession and Forgiveness? One scandal leads to another.

JERRY REIDY

Conshohocken, Pennsylvania

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Is this the kind of thing Christians should do?

It seems to me that Jesus was rarely shy about making his presence known. I think that, if Christ were really present at a church's Eucharistic services, just about everyone else present would know it and they would go out and tell others. No money would have to be spent specifically to spread this belief.

One of my grandmothers loved wrestling, and her favorite wrestler was Gorgeous George. Believe me, whenever she saw Gorgeous George wrestle, she told the entire family about it at dinner the next day. He was not God, and yet she was able to easily detect his presence and she just had to tell others about it.

Really, isn't is enough to have the Holy Spirit present at our services and in our lives? Isn't that the important thing? Doesn't the Holy Spirit comfort, protect, teach, inspire and lead us as we follow the example and teachings of Christ in loving our neighbors?

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GEORGE DESNOYERS

Chicopee, Massachusetts

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This article made me so sad on so many levels. Firstly, that the bishops see belief in the Eucharist as the problem is so typical of their blindness to the problems that the people of the church see as the problems of the church.

It's not faith keeping us away but the clericalism of the church, the inability of the church to take responsibility of the sex abuse. It's inability to accept equally women, LGBT folks, poor people, people of color, etc.

Secondly, $28 million with all the problems in the world like the lack of food, housing and medical care is unconscionable. The fact that this would be financed primarily by rich white guys and their corporations make it only worse. A $300-350 admission fee certainly won't make this gathering available to the average Joe in the pew or make it appealing to anyone who would be on the fence about church.

Sounds like a large gathering of folks who will continue to encourage people to applaud them for lauding themselves over us the peons of the church.

ANNA PATTERSON

St Louis, Missouri

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To heed Michael Sean Winters' warning about avoiding a boondoggle when they spend $28 million on their Eucharistic Congress, the bishops should revisit the Second Vatican Council's document on the sacred liturgy. They will find the official church teaching that Christ is present in the Eucharist in four ways: a) in the assembly of the believers; b) in the person of the presider; c) in the liturgy of the word; d) in the bread and wine that becomes his body and blood.

Rather than unpacking the meaning of transubstantiation, revise seminary formation to recruit and train presiders who a) understand they are ordained to serve the assembly of believers; b) unpack the word in meaningful homilies that nourish and challenge us; c) understand that the Eucharistic prayer, including the words of consecration, is a prayer for the whole community assembled, not just the presider.

Finally, help us all understand and appropriate the deep meaning of "receiving" communion: we become what we eat: the body of Christ missioned to serve the least of our brothers and sisters.

JIM PURCELL

NCR board member

Los Gatos, California

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I am shocked! How can the hierarchy rationalize this amount of expense when there is such great need worldwide for housing, food, drinkable water, clothing, etc. Do these men live under rocks? Show me in the Gospels where this kind of expenditure is validated.

How dare we come before the Lord in Eucharistic adoration while ignoring the same Eucharistic Christ in the Eucharist in the guise of the poor.

SHEILA A. LITSCH

Clinton, Oklahoma

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