

*Continuing our Easter series on the celebration of the Mass, our first question from the question box asks about the "Mystery of faith when the priest changes the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ."*

The Mass, like all prayer, is a conversation, an exchange of words and ultimately persons between ourselves and God in which he communicates himself to us and we respond by communicating ourselves to him. The high point and most sacred moment of this conversation is when God communicates himself to us in the body and blood of his Son at the moment we call the consecration, to which we respond by our acclamation of faith.

In the consecration, the priest, acting in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*), reenacts the moment when Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. With the words, "This is my body," and, "This is the chalice of my blood," common bread and wine are transformed into the real presence of Christ - body, blood, soul, and divinity. That is why the priest genuflects at that moment, acknowledging that God has come among us in the person of his Son. That is also why the priest then invites the congregation to respond to Christ's presence with the acclamation of faith. While most of the prayers of the Mass are directed to God the Father, we now directly address God the Son, present on the altar, with words proclaiming our faith in his saving death and resurrection, the Paschal Mystery, "When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Oh Lord, until you come again."

God communicates himself to us in the consecrated bread and wine, and we communicate ourselves to him in our acclamation of the mystery of our faith. Thus the conversation that is the Mass reaches its peak and moves us on toward realizing our communion with God by receiving him in Holy Communion.