

Jesus is really present tonight. What does that mean? Let me give you some examples.

On the wall of my bedroom I keep photos of some of my family and friends . Even though I live alone, the spirit of those people lives with me and continues to influence me.

Whenever I go to the ballpark and root for the Royals, my father is with me, even though he's at home.

In my kitchen whenever I cook with the confidence of my mother. Even though she's not there when I cook, she's there in how I cook.

When my college music teacher died a few years ago, I felt a part of me had died too. But now when I play, I feel that she's coaching me.

When I exercise, I wear running shoes. They remind me of my high school track coach, who bought me my first pair of Nikes as a gift when I was ordained a priest 16 years ago.

When I drive through our city, I see the things which made our city great: I see the riverfront where pioneers whom I never knew traded fur pelts 160 years ago in the shadow of the first St. Regis Church, I see the Truman Library where we've buried our most famous local politician, and I see cement where Pendergast may have buried some of our most infamous local politicians. Those people formed our community, and their spirit still guides us.

You have people like these in your life. They may not be here, but they're still here. They live on in monuments, trinkets, and stories.

Jesus also lives on. He is really present tonight. Not just in another monument, not just in a statue, not in a pair of Nikes. He lives on in people, in ritual, and in service. The Catholic Church consistently and faithfully proclaims that in the eucharist, bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. Not that bread and wine remind us of Christ, but that they become Christ, so that when we eat, and we drink, when we tell our story, and when we serve, we also become Christ. We never become our teachers, we never become our parents, we never become our politicians. We do become Christ. In the eucharist we are the real presence of Christ.

People influence us the most when we change our behavior to become like them. When we most want to become Christ, we worship, eat, drink, and serve.

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