

The Eucharist, Source of the New Evangelization
(Recommended to run in June or near the Feast of Corpus Christi)

During the month of June, the Church turns her thoughts to her most precious of gifts: the Holy Eucharist. On the feast of Corpus Christi, we celebrate the great outpouring of love by Christ on the Cross, which remains a permanent and real presence among us in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. It is appropriate, then, during this month to consider the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church's great work of evangelization.

J.R.R. Tolkien, author of the *Lord of the Rings*, once wrote in a letter to his son,

“Out of the darkness of my life, so much frustrated, I put before you the one great thing to love on earth: the Blessed Sacrament... There you will find romance, glory, honor, fidelity and the true way of all your loves on earth...”

In Tolkien's words, we discover the secret of all great evangelization: the awareness that the personal encounter with Jesus Christ fulfills all of the deepest desires of the human heart. True evangelization always bridges the gap between the inner life of the human person and the person of Jesus Christ by showing how they are made for one another. Tolkien does this with brilliance. He is saying to his son, “Are you looking for love, honor, glory? Look no further than the Blessed Sacrament.” For the personal encounter with Christ that satisfies all desire is nowhere more real or intimate than in the Eucharist. Tolkien's words are all the more effective because he is speaking them from his own heart, “Out of the darkness of my life, so much frustrated”, he relates. There is no ulterior motive or attempt to coerce in what he is saying. He is simply speaking to his son out of his own experience of the search for happiness and the discovery of that happiness in the Eucharist.

As we look around us, we can be tempted to despair as we watch the moral and cultural decline of our society. We watch our friends and loved ones abandon the practice of their faith for an almost entirely secular lifestyle. But we must look in hope to the Eucharist. For, even while living a secular lifestyle, the human person can never stop being a person who is *made for love*—God's love above all. As Tolkien remarks, in the Eucharist, we find “the true way of all our loves upon earth.” What he means by this is that although the human person is perennially tempted to express his “being made for love” in many disordered ways, he finds in the Eucharist the one path in his search for love that will bring him true peace. Indeed, it is *only* in the Eucharist that we find the true meaning of romance, honor and glory.

The first step in our work of evangelization about the Eucharist is that we ourselves be seated at the feet of Jesus in the Mass, the tabernacle and the monstrance. Like Tolkien, we must experience in the silence of our hearts the love that awaits us there. Only then will we be ready to bear witness *from our hearts* to the great peace, joy and life that comes from this greatest of the Church's gifts.
~Meghan Cokeley, Director, Office for the New Evangelization, Archdiocese of Philadelphia