**But for the grace of God – through Jesus Christ, our Lord**

By: + Most Rev. David S. Moody, D.D., Th.D.

God's grace is expressed through the dual nature of Christ (man and God) and the trinity of persons in God. These two mysteries are fundamental to Catholic belief and the Church's teachings about God. On his deathbed, just before receiving the Holy Eucharist, the Church's most precious sacrament, St. Thomas Aquinas, considered to be one of the fathers of the Church, said: “If in this world there be any knowledge of this sacrament stronger than that of faith, I wish now to use it in affirming that I firmly believe and know as certain that Jesus Christ, True God and True Man, Son of God and Son of the Virgin Mary, is in this Sacrament.”

St. Thomas affirms Christ's humanity, that Jesus was born and died a man, with a man's physical strengths and weaknesses. The Catholic Church teaches that it is our great gift that Christ walked among us, was one of us, and that he took on the burden of atonement for our sins. St. Thomas also affirms Jesus' divinity, that the man who walked among us 2,000 years ago was indeed a divine person, a person of God, who made himself over into our image for a brief time.

What is “incarnation”? Incarnation, which literally means “made into flesh,” describes what happened when Jesus assumed a bodily form and the human condition. Understanding the concept of the Incarnation is essential to the Catholic belief system

The Catholic belief in God as a real, living presence is best exemplified in the Eucharist, another of the mysteries fundamental to the Catholic faith. Celebration of the Eucharist, the Mass, is the centerpiece of Catholic worship.

During this ceremony, the assembly partakes of bread and wine that, through consecration, are converted into the Mystical Body and Blood of Christ. The process through which the bread and wine are converted is known as “transubstantiation.” Through transubstantiation, the bread and wine are literally changed into Christ's body and blood. In sharing this sacrament, the entire Catholic community is united in communion with Christ. For this reason, the Mass is also known as the Holy Communion.