

## Phenomenon

Practicing one of the many world religions has become the trend among celebrities such as the Prima donna Britney Spears and Top Gun man Tom Cruise. From Kaballah to Buddhism to Scientology, the new-age world religions are finding popularity and a voice in the media. As diverse as these faiths are, they do have a common thread: they lack a personal God, a God who loves and who is present to His people. They may offer a moral code, a way to obtain “happiness”, or perhaps even practical wisdom, but, ultimately, they are empty. They are simply philosophies and practices.

In contrast to these other religions, Catholicism is about a Person and having a relationship with that Person. Catholicism is centered around the Eucharist which is the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ. Christ tells His disciples, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in Him.” Jesus yearns to be present to us, to the point where he actually invites us to consume Him in the Eucharist. Jesus wants us to be in Him and for Him to be in us, not figuratively but literally! Budha or the founder of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, makes no such invitation to their followers. Furthermore, Christ makes this invitation to us knowing what it would take to establish and maintain that relationship. We know from experience that it can take great effort to keep up relationships with family and friends. But consider the effort Christ made in order to form a relationship with us in the Eucharist. He had to take on our weak human nature, endure the criticisms and doubts of His own Jewish people, and suffer one of the most violent, humiliating deaths known to man. God desperately wants a relationship with us! But not just any relationship, the most intimate kind in which His flesh is joined to ours when we partake of the Eucharist at Mass. He does not wish to be a far off deity but greatly desires us to approach Him at the altar. That is the awesome meaning of the Eucharist.

Too often, receiving the Eucharist is reduced to being a part of our Sunday obligation or being a piece of bread. If these attitudes were accurate reflections of the truth of our Catholic faith, then Catholicism could be counted among the many other different philosophies and practices of other religions. However, that is not the reality. The Eucharist makes Catholicism a phenomenon among the religions. Indeed, the Catholic Church does have teachings and practices, but they all point to and lead the believer into intimate relationship with the Eucharist, the person of Jesus Christ and our God. How quickly the glitz and glam of Kaballah and the like fade in the beautiful radiance of the Eucharist!

All for the Sacred and Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, All through the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, All in union with St. Joseph!