LIBBY: Hey. Why the long face, Seabiscuit?

KAI: Just call me Kai.

LIBBY: No, but really, why the horse thing?

KAI: To show that appearances don't always reflect reality. I might look like a horse on the outside, but I'm still Kai on the inside. Just like how the Eucharist looks like bread and wine. Where do I look? I can't see the cameras.

 CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING CREDITS

LIBBY: Hey, There. I'm Libby.

KAI: And I'm Kai. Welcome to Catholic Central. Today, we're talking about the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

LIBBY: Hold on a second. Didn't we already do a Eucharist episode?

KAI: Yes, but we only spent 27 seconds on the Real Presence.

LIBBY: Oh, we can do better than that. You might be wondering why does it matter enough to have its own episode? The God of the entire universe makes Himself available to us.

KAI: It's through the Real Presence that we come to intimacy with Jesus, and how His sacrifice on the Cross 2,000 years ago gives us life here and now.

LIBBY: In John 6, Jesus says, “I am the bread of life. Whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

KAI: Then He hits them with a doozy: “The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”

LIBBY: To which His audience responded.

ANCIENT

KAI: How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

LIBBY: Everyone's confused in a way they weren't when Jesus said things like, “I am the vine; you are the branches,” or “I am the Good Shepherd.” When He said those things, they knew He was speaking metaphorically.

KAI: But when He says the bread that I will give is my flesh, they're so confused. They start quarreling, and Jesus speaks up to clarify.

LIBBY: If, by clarify, you mean double down. Jesus responds by swearing a Jewish oath. “Amen. Amen. I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life within you.”

KAI: He proceeds to hit the point over and over again, for the next five verses. He also gets more and more emphatic, switching from the Greek word for eat to the Greek word for gnaw or chew.

LIBBY: Lest there remain any confusion, He wraps up by repeating that if we want life, we must eat His flesh and drink His blood, but that He will give His flesh as bread from heaven.

KAI: Then, at the Last Supper, Jesus breaks bread and blesses wine and says, “This is my body, this is my blood.”

STUDENT

LIBBY: So, Jesus is spiritually present along with the bread and wine. Why is that so hard for everyone to get?

LIBBY: Not exactly. Formal Definition Time.

FORMAL

KAI: Real presence means that in the Eucharist, the Body and Blood together with the Soul and Bivinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ, is truly, really and substantially contained.

FORMAL

LIBBY: The Catechism clarifies that this is called Real Presence, not because God isn't really present in other ways, like nature, Scripture or loving your neighbor, He certainly is, but because it is presence in the fullest sense.

LIBBY: Wow, that was formal. What both Jesus and the Catechism are drawing our attention to, is that in the Eucharist, we are becoming one with Jesus, who is fully present, not eating bread and drinking wine.

KAI: In theological speak, we're talking about the difference between substance, what something truly is in and of itself, and accident, a contingent or non-essential attribute of something.

LIBBY: Best demonstrated in everyone's favorite game, Things About Libby: Substance or Accident?

KAI: OK.

LIBBY: Blonde hair.

KAI: That's a changeable quality, so accident.

LIBBY: Being a union of body and soul.

KAI: Part of the definition of your humanity itself, so substance.

LIBBY: Fun fashion sense.

KAI: Not essential to your existence, so accident.

LIBBY: Having an intellect and a will and being created in God's image.

KAI: That is essential. Substance.

LIBBY: General awesomeness.

KAI: Need you even ask? Substance.

LIBBY: Thank you. So, what the Church understands Jesus' teachings to mean is this: During the Mass, when the priest consecrates the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and wine changes, while the accidents of the bread and wine stay the same.

KAI: So, that what appears to be bread and wine through its accidental qualities – look, smell, taste, etc. – has actually been changed in substance into the Real Presence of Christ, fully there in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

LIBBY: We can understand analogies for this, like, if this happens.

OFFICER

KAI: You're under arrest.

LIBBY: You can just ignore him and walk away, because Kai's not an actual police officer.

KAI: Right, but if someone with the authority to arrest you says those words in the right context, you look the same, maybe feel the same, but you're no longer a free person. However, all analogies fall short because the only time a change in substance without a change in accidents ever fully happens is in the Eucharist.

LIBBY: That's why the Church came up with a special word to describe it: transubstantiation.

KAI: It's hard to wrap your head around. Right?

LIBBY: Absolutely, but not just for you and me. Some of the smartest Christians throughout history have admitted that while they believe it, they don't fully understand it.

KAI: Like, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, who around 350 A.D. said:

ST. CYRIL

KAI: The apparent bread is not bread, even though it is sensible to the taste, but the Body of Christ. The apparent wine is not wine, even though the taste would have it so.

LIBBY: While our senses tell us that we see bread, our faith trusts what Jesus Himself said.

KAI: He would give us bread from heaven, but it would be His flesh and blood.

LIBBY: If you think about it, it's actually kind of nice that Jesus leaves it looking and tasting like bread and wine, so that we can receive the fullness of His person in, as the Church says it, an unbloody way.

KAI: Which makes the way we receive Him, and become one with Him, much more like the way a bride and groom become one on their wedding, and not like the way I make a steak one with me at dinner.

LIBBY: Exactly, but actually that leads to an interesting point. There have been times when the appearances of bread and wine have gotten a little more … fleshy.

KAI: That's a very good point, Libby. There have been times in history, usually when people have been struggling to believe, that God revealed His Real Presence by allowing the accidents to change as well. So, a Communion host would bleed or, in some cases, visibly be changed to flesh and blood. What's even more amazing is that your everyday, run-of-the-mill Eucharist, gives us complete access to the totality of God.

LIBBY: The more we are united to Him, the easier it is to share His love and His life with the people around us, to be Christ to others.

KAI: One other thing: the Real Presence allows us to just spend time with Jesus today. You can go into pretty much any Catholic church, and there in the tabernacle is Jesus, fully present. That's why Catholics kneel in front of a tabernacle, because God is there, waiting for you.

LIBBY: Normally, I'd say we should do a summary or something here but that was pretty good.

KAI: For real.

LIBBY: Presence.

KAI: I'm Kai.

LIBBY: And I'm Libby. Check out our website at CatholicCentral.com for more resources on the real presence and the Eucharist.

KAI: We'll see you next time.

LIBBY: On Catholic Central.

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