

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Our next topic at which we will look is Communion. While for each person this is a relatively short part of the Mass, it is vastly important and cannot be covered in one article. In this first article, I will speak about the practical piece of receiving Communion. Next week, we'll look at the spiritual piece.

Up to this point in the Mass, we should have been preparing our hearts and souls to receive our God. "While the heart of the celebration of the Eucharist is the Eucharistic Prayer, the *consummation* of the Mass is found in Holy Communion" ("Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America ["Norms"] 5, emphasis added). The reception of Communion is the culmination of the Mass, and so we must prepare ourselves. As we process forward, we "should move with dignity; our bearing should be that of those who know they have been redeemed by Christ and are coming to receive their God!" ("The Reception of Holy Communion at Mass" [RHCM] uscbb.org). We are not on parade, nor should we be looking around at the people we are passing, but recognizing that this is the **high point** of our week – we are about to receive Almighty God into our bodies and souls! This is a Mystery we need to ponder constantly: that Almighty God humbles Himself that much because He loves us so much and wants to be united to us!

The Church asks that what we do at Mass be done in unity, as one Community, and so we are to "shun any appearance of individualism or division" (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* #95). We sing a Communion Song as we process in order to be together, be united as one.

When we come to receive Communion we are to make an act of reverence – some action to show honor and love to the God we are to receive, and humility before Him. In the United States, we are to make a profound bow (a bow from the waist), and in the ordinary form of the Mass (what we celebrate here at St. Patrick), we are to receive the Eucharist while standing.

When the minister says, "The Body of Christ," the proper response is, "Amen" (not *thank you*). Remember that *Amen* means "I believe" or, deeper, "I would stake my life on it." There are countless beautiful stories about people who have loved our Lord in the Eucharist so much that they have risked (or even given) their lives in order to protect the Host from desecration. We respond, "Amen," "YES, I BELIEVE IT IS REALLY JESUS, ALMIGHTY GOD, WHO IS ABOUT TO ENTER INTO MY BODY AND SOUL!!!!"

The Church gives us the option of receiving on the tongue or in our hands. If you receive on the tongue, I would ask that you make sure your mouth is sufficiently open, and tongue forward to receive the Lord. This is a practical point that makes it easier for the ministers to place Jesus in your mouth. If you receive the Eucharist in your hands, the hands should be clean (after all, the One who *is* purity is about to be placed there). Normally, you should not reach out with your fingers and take the host from the minister, but rather receive Him: let Him be placed in your hands (*cf.* RHCM). You should make a throne for the Lord, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem has said:

"When you approach, take care not to do so with your hand stretched out and your fingers open or apart, but rather place your left hand [if you are right handed] as a throne beneath your right, as befits one who is about to receive the King. Then receive him, taking care that nothing is lost" (Quoted in *Norms* 41).

After receiving the Lord, we return to our seats to reflect on the Mystery which we have just received. We continue to sing the Communion Song while Communion is given out, to signify that in the Eucharist, we are all one – of one voice and one spirit.

Okay, so we spent some time looking at the practical piece of receiving Communion. Next week, we'll look more deeply at the Mystery of Jesus giving Himself to us in the Eucharist.