

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Last week we looked at the practical part of receiving Communion. Today, we will look more closely at what it means to receive this great gift.

Remember that the Eucharist is not a symbol of Jesus, but truly IS Jesus. It is His whole humanity that He took from Mary – Body, Blood, and Soul – as well as His total Divinity, or Godliness. St. Cyril of Jerusalem put it this way: “We have been instructed in these matters and filled with an unshakable faith that what seems to be bread is not bread, though it tastes like it, but the Body of Christ, and that what seems to be wine is not wine, though it tastes like it, but the Blood of Christ” (qtd. in *Norms* 13). Our senses can deceive us as to what this Communion is, but our faith reminds us that Jesus’ Presence is there. That the Eucharist is not so much a “what” as a “who,” Jesus the Lord.

The Church reminds us that the heart of “the celebration of the Eucharist is the Eucharistic Prayer, [but] the consummation of the Mass is found in Holy Communion” (*Norms* 5). Communion is a *union of love*. His Presence cries out for us – “I thirst!” (John 19:28). He longs for us; He thirsts for our love, for union. This is truly the consummation of the Mass. As in a marital union, the husband gives himself to his wife, and the wife receives him into her, so (in a non-sexual way) there is this marital union between Christ and His Church in Communion. This is the height of God’s love for us. Remember that at the Last Supper, Jesus says to His disciples: *This is my Body given for you*. We see this lived out the next day on Calvary, as Jesus gives Himself fully on the Cross. The Eucharist is the total, faithful, free and fruitful gift of love of Christ for His Church. When we receive Communion, this is the consummation of the marriage between Christ and His Church – your soul.

Have you ever thought of this before? Too often we neglect the love of Christ. Too often we don’t prepare ourselves properly to receive Him in Communion – to consummate the marriage of the Lamb. We so often treat Him as a dead object. Jesus, speaking to St. Faustina, said:

I desire to unite Myself with human souls; My great delight is to unite Myself with souls. Know, My daughter, that when I come to a human heart in Holy Communion, My hands are full of all kinds of graces which I want to give to the soul. But souls do not even pay any attention to Me; they leave Me to Myself and busy themselves with other things. Oh, how sad I am that souls do not recognize Love! They treat Me as a dead object. (*Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowlaska: Divine Mercy in My Soul* #1385)

Indifference to Jesus’ love is a sword that pierces His Heart! He is so in love with us and desires a union of love; He longs for our love.

Our souls need to be purified to be in union with Him. If we have grave sin on our souls, we need to go to confession so we can be washed clean and made right with God. We need to repent even of our venial (smaller) sins. The Church reminds us:

As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion. We are encouraged to receive Communion devoutly and frequently. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should *not be conscious of grave sin* and normally should have fasted for one hour. *A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession* except for a grave reason where there is no opportunity for confession. In this case, the person is to be mindful of the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible (canon 916). A frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all. (*Norms* 5, emphasis added)

St. Paul also reminds us that we are to receive Communion in a state of grace, or it could be a serious harm to us:

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a considerable number are dying. (I Corinthians 11:27-30)

May we truly be aware of the gift God gives us in Communion, and prepare well to receive Him!