

Homily: 7th Sunday of Easter: Cycle B: 2015: Acts 1: 15-17, 20a, 20c-26; Ps 103; 1 Jn 4: 11-16; Jn 17:11b-19

“Reflecting on the reality of the Eucharist as children make their 1st Holy Communion”

1. **Reality** - Jesus’ one eternal Sacrifice for the salvation of the human race living and deceased is renewed at every Mass! What a gift! It is truly Jesus’s Body and Blood under the signs of bread and wine. As Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John chapter 6, He gives as his Body and Blood as true food and true drink. It is not cannibalism. The graces Jesus won for us on the Cross are applied to us and the whole world at every Mass; how much we benefit from the grace depends on the disposition of our hearts when we attend Mass and particularly when we receive Holy Communion. The offering of the Mass benefits both the living and the deceased, which is why we offer Masses for our departed loved ones; it is one of the spiritual works of mercy of the Church. Jesus loves us so much to pour out His graces of salvation on all of us at each and every Mass. **The Second Vatican Council calls says the Eucharist is the source and summit of our Faith as Catholics**, which is also why we need to pray daily for an increase in vocations to the priesthood since the priesthood and the Eucharist are intimately connected.
2. **Reverence** - We all should have a profound spirit of reverence, thanksgiving and gratitude for the fact that Jesus gave us the Eucharist as the perpetual memorial of His Holy Passion, and that He will remain with us sacramentally in all the Tabernacles throughout the world until He comes again in glory. What are some **practical things** we can do to show Him our reverence and our gratitude for this profound gift of His Body and Blood in the Eucharist? The first and most important is to make sure we never receive Jesus in Holy Communion when we have mortal sin on our soul. We need to go to Confession first before receiving Holy Communion in that situation. In addition we show our love for Him by remembering to keep the simple one hour fast from food and drink (this includes gum and candy), with the exception of water and medicine, prior to receiving Holy Communion. Also genuflecting to the Tabernacle when entering Church and leaving. Also trying to dress appropriately (Sunday best) for Mass shows that we

recognize this as a special event and reality. We also should never come to Mass immodestly dressed, especially as we approach the summer months: *remember our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and we are not to lead others into temptation in this regard*. Reverence also includes coming to Mass regularly on time and not leaving early unless we are sick or absolutely can't help it because of work or family obligations that we can't get out of. Remember Mass begins with the opening hymn and doesn't officially end until the final hymn is ended. Finally we need to cultivate a spirit of recollection and prayer at Mass. Come early to prepare your heart for this gift of the Mass, and after Communion spend some minutes talking to the Lord who is now in your heart- the saints recommend making a **15-30 minute quiet thanksgiving**, as soon as you can, in Church or outside of Church, in gratitude for receiving Jesus in Holy Communion. In relation to that, we also should try our best to not talk to and distract others unless absolutely necessary before, during, and after Mass because other people are trying to pray. Now that the weather is nice, if we want to talk to someone before or after Mass, we should step outside. This shows spiritual love for both God present in our Tabernacle and for our neighbor who may be trying to silently pray.

3. **Response - What is our overall response to the Lord? **We are to offer the gift of our lives in union with Jesus as He offers Himself to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit for our salvation at every Mass.** *If we understand what a gift the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus is, we will always want to be here and never skip out: no vacation from Mass which sometimes happens, particularly in the summer in some Catholic homes. And would never dream of leaving the Catholic Church, despite whatever problems we may sometimes encounter on the human level.* The Eucharist or Mass should be the foundation of our spiritual lives as Catholics. The Sunday Liturgy should be the highpoint of our week. We should also try to go to **daily Mass**, if that is possible, with our schedules. It's only a half hour a day! All retired Catholics should really try to attend daily Mass - what a beautiful preparation to someday see the Lord in eternity. Finally I encourage all of you to come to our usual Thursday night 6 pm **Eucharistic holy hour**. What a**

gift it is to adore our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. We share our lives with our family and friends, why not with the source of our lives, namely, the Lord? This is such a source of blessing for our lives; prayer before the Tabernacle transforms us like no other. St. John Vianney said once, *“if only more and more people would pray before the Blessed Sacrament the Church and the world would quickly be transformed by the Lord’s love.”* In the summer months, when I am here, I will leave the big Church open in the day if you want to come for a visit. The Body and Blood of Jesus truly is **medicine for our souls** to heal us of selfishness and sin and enable us to grow in goodness and virtue, in His image. **Depending on our disposition of heart and soul, each time we receive Holy Communion and adore the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, it should draw us deeper into the love of the Trinity.** Remember the 3 persons of the Trinity can never be separated, so when we receive Jesus’ Body and Blood as the Second person of the Trinity, we also mysteriously receive spiritually the Father and the Holy Spirit; similarly as when we adore Jesus’ Real Presence we are also adoring the Father and Holy Spirit. In Holy Communion, Jesus wants to turn us into the image of Himself more and more, in self-giving love, generosity and kindness. The primary way this occurs is through the reception of the Eucharist with a humble heart and a deep faith in His Real Presence contained therein. He also draws us and attracts us to a deeper spirit of **prayer** in our daily lives the more we receive His Body and Blood with love and gratitude and with that deep spirit of faith and humility. As we draw close to Him in the Eucharist, Jesus will also teach us how to see Him in our **neighbor**, so we can truly love Him and serve Him in other human beings in a spirit of generosity. The Eucharist properly received will lead more and more to works of kindness in relation to others. The fulfillment of the great commandment of love of God and neighbor will occur ever more deeply in our lives the more we respond to the gift of the Lord’s Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist. As our young people receive their 1st Holy Communion this Sunday, let us never take for granted the Blessed Sacrament: the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ our Savior. *O’ Sacrament Most Holy, O’ Sacrament Divine, May Praise and Thanksgiving be every moment Thine.* God bless you.

Recommended Reading:

From Holy Communion to the Blessed Trinity. By M.V. Bernadot, O.P. Translated by Dom Francis Izard, O.S.B. The Newman Press. 1955. (This is a little classic spiritual work on the collection between Holy Communion and the Blessed Trinity; please check www.amazon.com or Loomer theological booksellers www.loomebooks.com for a used copy- it is most worth while purchase.)

In the Presence of our Lord: The History, Theology, and Psychology of Eucharistic Devotion. By Fr. Benedict Groeschel C.F.R. & James Monti. Our Sunday Visitor Press. 1997. (This is the best history of Eucharistic devotion written in the late Fr. Groeschel's characteristic readable style. If you purchase it directly from the CFR's his religious community all the money goes to help the poor: www.franciscanfriars.com.)

A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist. By Abbot Vonier. 1925. Zaccheus Press. Reprint. 2004. See: www.zaccheuspress.com.

The Mass of the Early Christians. By Mike Aquilina. Our Sunday Visitor Press. 2001.