

From the Pastor's Printer

First Communion: More than Meets the Eye

This Sunday, we begin our First Holy Communion marathon with two Masses being celebrated this weekend and one next weekend. This milestone in a child's life is not meant to be a mark of something unique that happens once, but is rather meant to be a starting point in a way of living in Christ. It's first of all nourishment in the life received in Baptism. That life is nothing less than Christ living within us so that we can live in Him. Now, we are nourished with the Body and Blood of the Lord, not so that He may become stronger in us, but rather that we may continually grow in Him. This is not accomplished by simply physically receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord, but receiving it as a culmination of everything we do at Mass and everything Mass can do for us.

We come together prompted by the Spirit as the family of God, a family that is far from perfect, but one fully loved by God our Father. We are not called to it simply to receive something for ourselves, but also to give of ourselves for the sake of our brothers and sisters (the same attitude with which God's Son came to earth: he did not come for his own gain, but that others might gain from him). We come to give praise and thanks to God for what he has done for us in making us his own children who can live forever in a happiness beyond our wildest imagining. And we come because in doing this, we move forward in the journey to eternal life. In this gathering Christ is among us, because in this gathering we are showing forth His Mystical Body of which he is its Head, and we are the members of His Body.

We listen to the word of God spoken in the Scriptures through the readers, cantor, deacon or priest who are the mouthpiece of God. In this, we encounter the plan of God and the mind and action of God which is always oriented towards our growing life in Christ. The word is not something *directed at* us; it is *given to* us with the intent that we accept it into our lives, ponder it, and act upon it. In the reception of the Scriptures, Christ is present to us and for us, since knowing God and seeking to follow him makes us present to Him just as He is present to us in

the words He speaks.

We go to the altar of the Lord bringing bread and wine to make an offering to God of something we on our own can never create; the offering of the only thing worthy of the Father, which is His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. With gifts of creation we pray for the Spirit to transform them into THE gift of the New Creation. Just as God provided Abraham with the offering (in place of Isaac), so he provides for us the Victim for our sacrifice. In the Eucharistic prayer, through the work of the Holy Spirit and Christ's full presence in the offering, we do not travel back in time to the one and only Sacrifice for our salvation, but rather out of love for us, that saving act is made present to us. In a specific time and place – Harrison, Ohio in 2018 – we transcend time and space to make ourselves, who live in Christ, part of His sacrifice as victim and priest. In short we are united with Christ in His saving work.

Having united our lives and wills to Christ's, we come forward to seal the offering by eating and drinking to what we have done. We receive the Body and Blood of the Lord in response to all that has preceded it – the gathering, the listening, the offering – it is the culmination of a being drawn into communion through various dynamics which lead us to this physical union with Christ, our Brother, our Redeemer, our God. To receive Holy Communion is not a transaction of grace as if we were buying bread at Remke's or wine at Kroger's—give money get object. No, it is a transforming act we freely choose to engage in or reject. It is an act that is meant to change our lives, but can only do so if we are willing to accept and submit to the reality it is, God and us becoming even more unified by the growing response to his call.

"A child will lead them" is a proverb that we can see in action today. These beautiful children of God approach the altar for the first time today to be transformed in ways they (and we) cannot fully understand. This gives us an opportunity to reflect on what God does for us every time we come to his altar.

Through the receiving of His Body and Blood may Christ dwell in our hearts, and may our hearts dwell in Christ.