

# From the Pastor's Printer

## What Does It Mean to Receive Holy Communion?

It is so easy in life to take for granted those things which are so accessible to us. I think that, living in a country in which religious freedom is taken for granted, and in a parish gifted with three priests and six Masses on a weekend, we can take the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist for granted, and we can also take the meaning and implications of receiving the Body and Blood of the Christ for granted as well. A timely question to ask on this Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ is the title of this article: what does this act of Communion mean?

First, it means that we receive the "totus Christus," the totality of Christ, God and Man, Soul and Body, the Word of God who has existed from all eternity, the Son who became human like us in all things but sin, the crucified Christ, who is risen from the dead. The bread and wine brought to the altar is transformed in its deepest and fullest reality into the fullness of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the word of Christ. While the "anything" that one can encounter in bread and wine remains, the reality (substance) of bread and wine is no more, for it is now the reality of Christ that is present.

Second, to receive Communion is to seal what was prayed before Communion with an action. What does this mean? It means that we take into ourselves the word of God heard in the readings (including the responsorial psalm) and the prayers, especially the Eucharistic Prayer. In other words, we, by this act of reception, are saying: "All that has been spoken and commanded in these readings and prayers we believe and agree to do." We do not receive Holy Communion on "our terms" but in light of what the Church has professed and committed us to. In the words of

Eucharistic Prayer III, we pray that "having been nourished with the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, we may become one body, one spirit in Christ." In other words, we are offering our lives to the Father in union with Christ's offering of his entire self on the cross. Receiving Holy Communion, then, is not simply an act of receiving, but equally a gift of offering. That is why the priest receives Communion first, as a sign of handing oneself over to the Lord.

Third, to receive Communion is simultaneously with the paragraph above, the receiving of the most profound acceptance of the gift of God the Father; that is, the reception of His only Begotten Son to nourish us into becoming more fully a vital member of Christ's body. This gift is given not simply to have the most wondrous gift of God, but also to accomplish in us what the gift is in and of itself. In other words, to transform and absorb us into God's very Being.

Fourth, this reception is a unity with the ONE Christ, and if each person receiving is united to Christ, we are then each united to each other. It is not simply a commitment of love with Christ; it is a commitment of love with all who are in Christ, and with all whom Christ loves.

In short, the receiving of Holy Communion is opening ourselves to the transforming love of God which strengthens us to love God and neighbor as we are called to do. In short, it is a gift that works only if we commit ourselves to Christ, the crucified and risen Lord of life. The words of St Augustine ring so true: "Receive the mystery that you already are." We are already in Christ, let us grow more and more into Him.

## Bulletin Bloopers:

Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.

Have a great week! – Fr. Jeff