

Readings for Corpus Christi

Extraordinary Form

1 Corinthians 11: 23-29

Brethren, I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also, the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. 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.

John 6: 55-58

At that time, Jesus said to the multitude of the Jews: My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever."

Dispositions incompatible with the Eucharist

Ave Maria Catholic Church. Sunday, June 2, 2024. Fr. David M Vidal

Today, the Church invites us to lift our eyes to the Most Blessed Sacrament and adore Jesus in the Eucharist—God with us! The Holy One, the Mighty One, comes to us and hidden under the Eucharistic veil, invites us to enter into Holy Communion with Him.

How do we prepare ourselves for this moment? What dispositions do we have before receiving Jesus in the Eucharist?

To receive Jesus in the Eucharist, there is a need for purity. Jesus reveals this necessity with a gesture at the Last Supper before instituting the Eucharist. At that time, He began to wash the disciples' feet.

That gesture was a sign used by Jesus to teach his disciples a lesson in humble service because they were busy thinking about who among them was the greatest (Luke 22:24). However, that action of Jesus involved more than a lesson in humility. To participate in the Eucharistic table, the disciples had to be clean.

Initially, Peter did not understand that gesture, but he said to Jesus: *“You will never wash my feet.”* Jesus answered him: *“Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me.”* Hearing that, Peter said: *“Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well.”* (John 13: 8-9).

To receive Jesus in the Eucharist, there is a need for purity. At the Last Supper, Jesus acknowledged the purity in the Twelve, except for one among them, because He said: *“You are cleansed, though not all”* (Jn 13:10). Judas was physically present in the room of the Last Supper, but his heart was not there. His heart was very much away from that room and away from Jesus. Then, St. John tells us that when Judas received the morsel given by Christ, *“Satan entered his heart”* (Jn 13:27).

Without the proper dispositions to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, the reception of the Eucharist becomes an act of betrayal.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul tells us: *“Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A man should examine himself first; only then should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself”* (1 Cor 11:27-29).

Before receiving the Eucharist, we must examine ourselves and discern and understand if we have the proper dispositions to participate in Holy Communion. Of course, in a certain sense, no one is worthy to receive the Body of Christ. For this reason, before receiving

Jesus in the Eucharist, at the moment of Communion, we acknowledge that we are not worthy to receive the Lord: *Domine, non sum dignus – Lord, I am not worthy*. However, Saint Paul's reference to unworthiness means something else. It refers to the interior dispositions that are incompatible with the Eucharist.

To receive Holy Communion, a baptized Catholic must be in a state of grace. This means that if the person carries the weight of a grave sin in his conscience, he must first look for the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession. Then, after clearing his conscience in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and receiving absolution for the sins committed, the person acquires the dispositions to receive Jesus in the Eucharist with spiritual fruits.

Why must a person abstain from receiving the Eucharist in a state of mortal sin? Because to be nourished, one must first be alive. The Eucharist is spiritual food and nourishment for those who are alive. However, a person who lives in mortal sin is spiritually dead. Then, to restore spiritual life in a person who is in mortal sin, Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Confession brings us back to life and gives us spiritual health. The Eucharist increases that life in us.

Years ago, a Diocese in the United States initiated a Lenten Program to encourage the faithful to return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The program was named: *“The Light is on for you.”* That was the light of the confessional. Not surprisingly, the program received opposition from the media. One of the prominent newspapers dedicated a space on the front page and an entire page in the main section to reflect on this initiative.

Lecturing on the history of the Church, the journalist wrote: *“After Vatican II, the whole idea was changed; it became a much more positive thing, less emphasis on fault and more on improvement.”* The journalist explained that *“Vatican II also made a slight change in the confession rite that emphasized a moment at the start of Mass in which parishioners, together, take a moment of penance.”* Finally, the writer expressed his frustration by saying: *“The Catholic Church is unwilling to adapt to the modern world. They’re still hung up on the dogma of ancient times”* (*The Washington Post*, February 22, 2007)

However, as much as worldly writers try to bend and twist the treasures of our faith that the Catholic Church has carried for centuries, the Church will continue to protect and defend them until Jesus returns.

We must defend the truth of our faith. There is nothing more positive than acknowledging our faults. To be positive in our lives, we must first reject what is negative in our lives. How will we improve if we cannot recognize our faults to correct them?

The Church has never changed the confession rite. On the contrary, every baptized Catholic has the obligation to go to confession at least once a year. That is a commandment of the Church.

Speaking to priests, Pope Benedict XVI said: *“The baptized need to rediscover the sacrament of reconciliation so that they can experience ‘the boundless renewing power of divine love.’”* (Feb. 19, 2007). While the world tries to change the Church to make her more alike to its principles, God wants to transform us through the Sacrament of Reconciliation to make us more like unto Him.

Pope Benedict XVI continued by saying: *“Only God can realize this miracle of grace, and he does so through the words and gestures of the priest. On experiencing the Lord's tenderness and forgiveness, the penitent more easily acknowledges the gravity of sin and reinforces his decision to avoid it and to remain and grow in his renewed friendship with him.”*

The penitential preparation at the beginning of Mass is insufficient for those who had a mortal sin on their conscience, and for that reason, the recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation is necessary to approach Eucharistic Communion worthily.

At the same time, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not reserved only for those who commit serious sins. It was instituted for the remission of all sins, and it is an irreplaceable sacrament in Christian life. It cannot be disregarded or neglected if we want the seed of divine life to mature in us.

Today, as we lift our eyes to the Most Blessed Sacrament, let us ask Jesus to create in us a pure heart to welcome Him in Holy Communion.