

The Pastor's Corner...

Eucharist Requires Truthfulness

In Sunday's Gospel we witness the story of the multiplication of bread by Jesus. This story not only testifies to Jesus' (God's) care for the material needs of the people, but above all, announces and foreshadows the true bread from heaven—the Eucharist. The Eucharist, called by St. Thomas Aquinas the “Sacrament of Sacraments,” is the real presence of Jesus Christ, body, blood, soul, and divinity, under the appearance of bread and wine. The Eucharist is also referred to as “Holy Communion.” “Communion” comes from the Latin *communio*, which means “to be in union with.”

Anyone who receives Jesus in the Eucharist also receives “the pledge of glory with him.” The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that participating in the Eucharist “identifies us with his Heart, sustains our strength along the pilgrimage of this life, makes us long for eternal life, and unites us even now to the Church in heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints.”

Receiving the Eucharist “increases the communicant's union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins.” Eucharist can also transform one's spiritual life since it is a “powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.”

At the same time, the Church draws on the words of Scripture in setting forth requirements for receiving Holy Communion. For as St. Paul tells us, “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.” (1 Cor 11:27-28).

There are two basic requirements Catholics must meet in order to receive Holy Communion worthily: 1) *one must be in a state of grace*, 2) *one must observe the Eucharistic fast*.

1. To be in a “state of grace” means to be free from mortal sin. As the Catechism states, “Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received



absolution in the sacrament of penance.”

What is a mortal sin? The Catechism explains that a mortal sin “destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God.”

For a sin to be mortal, or deadly, one must be aware that the act is sinful and consciously commit it anyway. *Examples of mortal sins include: murder, adultery, fornication, homosexual acts, theft, abortion, euthanasia, pornography, and taking advantage of the poor.* Intentionally skipping Mass on a Sunday or holy day of obligation when one is able to attend also is a mortal sin.

According to Canon Law: “*A person who is conscious of a grave sin is not to ... receive the body of the Lord without prior sacramental confession unless a grave reason is present and there is no opportunity of confessing; 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.*”

2. Regarding Eucharistic fasting, a person who is to receive the most Holy Eucharist is to abstain from any food or drink, with the exception only of water and medicine, for at least the period of one hour before Holy Communion. Elderly people, those who are ill, and their caretakers are excused from the Eucharistic fast.

Fr. Mark Jurzyk