

Eucharistic Revival

During the month of June we celebrate as a Church the feast of Corpus Christi on Sunday the 19th. This feast celebrates our belief as Catholics that the Eucharist (Holy Communion) is the Real Presence of Jesus' Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. It is our firm belief as Catholics that when the priest says the prayer of consecration at Mass (i.e. this is my body, this is my blood) the bread and wine cease to exist and are changed into the true Body and Blood of Jesus. Belief in the Blessed Sacrament is the source and summit of the entire Christian life. Sadly, for many Catholics today (even among those who attend Mass weekly) this belief in the True Presence is being lost. The USCCB has begun a process of Eucharistic Revival meant to foster greater devotion and faith in the Holy Eucharist. We will be kicking this off in our Tri-Parish community with a Eucharistic Procession on the feast of Corpus Christi after Mass in Mondovi.

In addition to the procession, the way we celebrate the Eucharistic Mystery in the Holy Mass reflects the Faith that we profess. To help better express this Faith we will be adding a few things as recommended by the Roman Missal and the Catholic Church to the celebration of our liturgies at our Tri-Parishes.

1. Kneelers at Holy Communion

The way we receive Holy Communion should also reflect the faith in the True Presence of Jesus' Body and Blood present in this Sacrament. St. Augustine once taught that "No one eats that flesh without first adoring it; we should sin were we not to adore it." As we process forward in the communion line, we should be interiorly recollected and avoid waving or talking to the people we pass as we go up to receive. Greatest care should be taken to avoid the appearance that we are simply passing through a line in a cafeteria rather than being united in the Real Presence of our Lord.

The Bishop's Conference of the United States have declared that the norm "is that Holy Communion is to be received **standing**, unless an individual member of the faithful wishes to receive Communion while **kneeling**" and it is up to the choice of the communicant to receive communion either on the tongue or in the palm of the hand.

For those who would desire to receive communion while kneeling we will have two kneelers put at the front of the Church to assist them. Their use is, of course, completely optional and there is no desire to imply that either standing or kneeling is a more holy way to receive Holy Communion, rather it is intended to show that either option is permitted by the Church.

Likewise, Holy Communion at the choice of the communicant may be received on the tongue or in the palm of the hand (the Sacrament should never be grabbed at or received in dirty hands).

A greater intentionality and devotion in the way we receive Holy Communion helps to order our minds to the great mystery that we are celebrating and is a great witness to that faith to others.

2. The Communion Plate

Our Catholic Faith teaches that once the bread and wine have been consecrated into the Body and Blood of Jesus in the sacrament of Holy Communion, the True Presence of Christ is there. This is true in the smallest visible crumb of the Host and every drop of the Precious Blood. The Church therefore encourages the use of communion plates which are held by the servers as Holy Communion is distributed. They are used to catch any Host or crumb of a Host that may inadvertently be dropped. Those who chose to receive Holy Communion in the hand should also take care that any visible crumbs are consumed and not simply brushed onto the floor.

3. The Chalice Veil.

Finally, you may have noticed that the chalice has now been veiled with a cloth of the same color as the liturgical day. Here is a reflection on the symbolism of the chalice veil:

“The source of a deeper symbolic meaning of the chalice veil is found in the Scriptures. As prescribed in Exodus and described in Hebrews, a veil or curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple... The chalice veil reminds us of the curtain setting apart the Holy of Holies, and prompts us to approach the altar aware of our unworthiness to enter into union with God.

The removal of the chalice veil is one of the first liturgical actions at the Offertory in preparation for the reception of the gifts of bread and wine from the congregation. The removal of the veil following the Liturgy of the Word signifies that the sacred mysteries are about to be revealed. Again, this action is a symbolic echo of the Scripture: *And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised* (Matthew 27:50-51).

The torn curtain at the death of Jesus signifies the transition from the Old Covenant to the consummation of the New Covenant promised by Jesus at the Last Supper: *“And likewise He took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’* (Luke 22:20). The removal of the chalice veil signifies the transition from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the “heavenly liturgy”.

Despite the barrier of our unworthiness, the unveiling of the chalice invites us to enter into the celebration of the sacred mysteries. When the veil is removed, the splendor of the chalice is exposed.” (*Adoramus*, Father Jerry Pokorsky)

It is our hope that these practices, encouraged by the Church, will help instill our Faith in the Real Presence of the Eucharist. This is also a great teaching opportunity for parents when your kids may ask what these additions to the Mass mean. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the entire Christian life. **“Once you understand the Eucharist, you can never leave the church. Not because the church won’t let you but because your heart won’t let you.”** - Mother Teresa