



From the Pastor
3rd Sunday of
Easter - B
April 14, 2024

Today's **Gospel** begins with a sentence that best summarizes our **Catholic** belief in our **Lord's Real**

Presence in the **Eucharist**: "The two disciples recounted what had taken place on the way, and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of bread." [Luke 24:35] Although those two disciples **WALKED** with - **TALKED** with and even the **ATE** with the **Risen Lord** - they only fully recognized Him when He **BROKE THE BREAD FOR THEM**. That's one reason why a **Service without Eucharist** is not enough for **Catholic Christians**; we need the **Blessed Sacrament** to **complete** and **sustain** our **unity** with the **Risen Lord** and **each other**.

In the **OCIA**, the **Order of Christian Initiation for Adults**, before the **newly Baptized** and **non-Catholic Christians** received into the **Church** are welcomed to receive **First Eucharist**, a rubric says: "Before the 'Behold the Lamb of God ... the Priest may briefly address the newly baptized about receiving their first Communion and about the excellence of this great mystery, which is the climax of Initiation and the center of the whole Christian life." [GIRM #64] Interestingly, the **OCIA** does **not** provide the words as it does for most **OCIA Rites**, so we composed this address:

Pre-First Communion Address

My dear newly received:

We begin our Christian Initiation at the Baptismal Font, and are strengthened along the way by the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.

But it is at this Table - the Table of the Lord - to which you come for the first time - that we celebrate and grow in our oneness in the Lord.

This is the highpoint of our earthly journey as Christians, for it is here that we meet the Lord Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

Come, all you who have passed through the waters and have been clothed in Christ.

Come with joy, come at last to the Banquet Table of the Lord!

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world.

Blessed are those called to the Supper of the Lamb.

IS RECEIVING EUCHARIST OUR HIGHPOINT? The liturgical renewal wrought by **Vatican Council II** in the 1960's intended to make the regular reception of the **Eucharist** far easier than it had been in recent centuries. A required 'fast' before receiving **Communion** was codified as far back as the 4th Century; in 1957, it went from **midnight** to **three** hours before receiving, and in 1964 it was **reduced** to just **one** hour. [Note: it is before **RECEIVING Communion**, not before **Mass** begins!] Late morning, afternoon and evening **Masses** then became possible. However, some say these relaxed disciplines backfired; for these days, fewer and fewer receive **Holy Communion!** Even worse: many now receive **Eucharist** without being properly disposed, by going to **Confession** or making a perfect **Act of Contrition** - or have little, if any, understanding of what, or rather, **WHO** they are receiving! It is the hope of our **Bishops** that their three-year **National Eucharistic Revival** will make things better.

As we witness our **First Communicants** come to the **Table of the Lord**, it is the perfect time to assess where the regular reception of **Holy Communion** ranks in our own life. Do I show how central **Eucharist** is by getting to **holy Mass** on time, dressing appropriately, actively and reverently participating, staying to the end and even after give thanks and support our brothers and sisters who worship with us? Do I respectfully invite others to join us, both **fallen away Catholics** and **non-Catholics**? Am I attentive to and open to **God's call** to be an **Altar Server**, **Cantor**, **Children's Liturgy of the Word Minister**, **Choir Member**, **Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion**, **Sacristan**, **Reader**, **Usher** ... or even a **Deacon** or **Priest**?

As a **Priest** for almost 21 years, I can truly say that celebrating **Holy Mass** is one of my greatest joys; it has never gotten 'old' or 'routine.' With a healthy 'boost in the arm' from our recent spectacular **Holy Week Services**, I am ready to go on celebrating **Holy Mass** until the **Lord** calls me home. There, in **Heaven's Eternal Banquet**, where **Sacraments** will no longer be needed, we will all enjoy what is now hidden in sacred signs: the **Real Presence** of the **Risen Lord**.

In Christ,

Father Mark

Rev. Mark A. Kreder, Pastor