

## **FOR THE GOOD OF THE HOUSEHOLD – May 11, 2009**

**Bishop Joseph V. Adamec**

### **THE EUCHARISTIC LITURGY**

Even though we celebrate the mysteries of Easter in a special way during the days prior to Pentecost, we recall the power of the resurrection every time that we participate at the Liturgy of the Eucharist or Mass (as we call it). It is there that we bring forth the memory of the Lord's Supper, his giving up of his body and pouring out of his blood on the cross.

This is not something recently invented. It dates back to the times of the Apostles and the first Christians. One of the oldest descriptions of how Mass was celebrated has been given us by Saint Justin the Martyr in his apologetics, dating back to the second half of the Second Century. He hoped that this explanation of how Christians worshipped would show that it was not a bloody orgy of some sort but one of prayer, fasting, and repentance. It was a rite celebrated by a presiding officer in obedience to Jesus' command to commemorate him and what He did.

Here is some of what Saint Justin wrote.

“No one may share the Eucharist with us unless he believes that what we teach is true, unless he is washed in the regenerating waters of baptism for the remission of his sins, and unless he lives in accordance with the principles given us by Christ.”

“We do not consume the Eucharistic bread and wine as if it were ordinary food and drink, for we have been taught that as Jesus Christ our Savior became a man of flesh and blood by the power of the Word of God, so also the food that our flesh and blood assimilates for its nourishment becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus by the power of his own words contained in the prayer of thanksgiving.”

“On Sunday we have a common assembly of all our members, ... The recollections of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read, ... When the reader has finished, the president of the assembly speaks to us; he urges everyone to imitate the examples of virtue we have heard in the readings. Then we all stand up together and pray.”

“On the conclusion of our prayer, bread and wine and water are brought forward. The president offers prayers and gives thanks to the best of his ability, and the people give their assent by saying, ‘Amen.’ The Eucharist is distributed, everyone present communicates, and the deacons take it to those who are absent.”

And, yes, there was a collection: “The collection is placed in the custody of the president, who uses it to help the orphans and widows and all who for any reason are in distress, whether because they are sick, in prison, or away from home. In a word, he takes care of all who are in need.”

Does this sound familiar? It should. I find it awesome to realize that our Liturgy is a continuation of that celebrated by those who have preceded us in the Assembly of Believers (called the Church) for all those centuries and one that will continue to the end of time.