

## SOME THINGS ABOUT THE EUCHARIST

The Liturgy is a wonderful gift left us by the Lord. At the Last Supper, Jesus told his Apostles to do in his memory what He had just done. He had taken bread and said that it was his body. Then, He took the wine and proclaimed it to be his blood, - that blood, which was to be shed for the sins of humankind on the following day.

The Apostle Paul, who had not been at the Last Supper and, in fact, had not converted to Christianity until a few years afterward, wrote about that moment. He wrote the Christians in Corinth that he had received the teaching from the Lord himself. "This means that every time you eat this bread and drink from this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. It follows that if anyone eats the Lord's bread or drinks from his cup in a way that dishonors him, he is guilty of sin against the Lord's body and blood."

Over the centuries, a liturgy has evolved around the Eucharist, - that is, the way of doing what the Lord commanded. That has varied from time to time and it continues to vary from one tradition to another. None of that takes away from the reality of the Eucharist being for us the very Body and Blood of Christ when proclaimed by a priest in the name of Christ.

Both internal and external dispositions are called for when partaking of the Body and Blood of the Lord without (as Saint Paul puts it) dishonoring him. When we prepare to receive someone in our home, we make certain that the house is ready and that we look the part. The more important the guest, the more diligent we are about doing it right. The dignity of the guest makes the difference.

The dwelling place that Christ wishes to enter is our very selves. Therefore, we ought to be in good graces with him. No one would think to invite into one's home someone with whom we have had a falling out. We make an effort to reconcile ourselves first.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is another wonderful gift in our Church. We also know it as Confession or Penance. Regardless, it is an encounter with the Lord's mercy and should be made a regular and frequent part of our spiritual lives. The Introductory Rite to the Mass is also penitential. Before we proceed to celebrate the Sacred Mysteries, we call to mind our sins.

As for the external preparation, dress has been a continual source of discussion. What should one wear to Mass? Since we believe that it is the Memorial of the Last Supper, I would say that one should wear the most appropriate attire for the occasion that one is able.

More important is how we conduct ourselves, including when we approach for the reception of Holy Communion. We are about to receive the very Body and Blood of the Lord. Centuries-old instructions tell us to make a throne with our left hand (with the right underneath, or vice versa). Then stepping aside and stopping, we reverently place the Eucharist in our mouth with the other hand. No one should break the Sacred Host before doing so. There are several things that can be helpful to the Minister of the Eucharist. The palms should be level and low enough to reach. The thumb should not stick out away from the fingers, as it can get in the way.

At an ordination rite, priests and deacons are reminded to be aware of what it is that they are doing. That should apply to all of us, especially when receiving Holy Communion.