

The Joy of the Eucharist



I want to share with you, my brothers, the awesomeness of the Eucharist, the great sacrament of unity, when we receive Our Lord's body and blood. I wish my words could make you taste the goodness, the sweetness, of our God!

What a tremendous sense of belonging and well-being I feel after receiving communion! What a longing to have the Lord come into my being I experience, as I listen to **His Holy Word** proclaimed from the scriptures at Mass every morning. I pray that He will let me live long enough to receive Him!

Isn't it just like our God to be so sublime in His perfection? First He gives us **His Word**, and then He gives us **His Word Made Flesh!** Just as He promised, He is with us until the end of time. For those who pray for Wisdom, this is as good as it gets in this life. To receive our God, **physically** in our beings, it is almost too much to speak of! I should put my hand over my mouth in utter speechlessness! Even if I were to die today, my day will have been a success if I have received the Lord. And a day without the Eucharist is a day of fasting indeed, for I am without the food of life. **For my flesh is real food**, says the Lord.

Speaking of food, I have a fairly unique confirmation of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist to share with you. I was born with a number of severe food allergies (intolerances) many of which were not discovered until my late teens. This has caused me nothing but grief all my life because these foods are used in combination with so many other foods that they are hard to avoid. I am allergic to milk, yeast and all the grains - corn, rice and especially wheat - as well as anything fermented, such as vinegar or alcohol. I will have a reaction within 20-30 minutes if I consume anything I am allergic to, even if I didn't know it was in what I ate. Yet I receive the bread and wine every day without any reaction because they actually become the **Lord's Body and Blood!**

I am reminded of the gospel story of the man born blind. Was it his sin or his parents' sin that caused him to be born blind? Neither. It was to glorify God. And so it is with my food allergies. All the misery it has caused me in my life has been so I could testify to you about the truth, and glorify God. Praise to the Lord! I gladly make the trade if it helps you to understand and believe, my brothers!



So thanks be to God for another day of life to receive Him! Just how many days of life am I allotted to praise the Lord? And how shall I spend them? Shall I deny myself the **Body and Blood of the Lord** when He waits for me in the consecrated bread and wine? What could I do that would praise Him more than worshipping Him and believing in the gift of **His Body and Blood?** What acts could I offer that would be greater? Everything flows downhill from His great gift. I will go forth to do His will by loving others because I have first recognized His love for me. And so I praise Him and worship Him in this great sacrament of unity.

Can I praise Him in the Eucharist and ignore my fellow man? Can I love my fellow man but deny God is present in the Eucharist? Of course not. Either way lacks wisdom. I must do both. For I only have so much time here to do His will. Just as Jesus told the Pharisees that it was not enough to tithe to the temple if they were ignoring the needs of the poor, so it is with both social justice and true worship of God in the Blessed Sacrament. We must do both.

St. Paul writes in a very literal sense that it is a denial of the Lord if we fail to see Him in the Eucharist. And the gospel tells us that many disciples of Jesus turned away when He told them, *Unless you eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, you shall not have life within you.*

Once again, our God is so sublime that He turns bread and wine into **His Body and Blood** so that we can receive Him without being grossed out. He created the bread and the wine, and He is certainly able to make it **His Body and Blood**. God is pretty weak if He can't do whatever He wants with His own creation. My God can do anything! How about yours?

Here is a true story. When my son was six years old he asked me one day, "Dad, if you're allergic to bread, how can you go to Communion?" And before I could answer, my 8 year old daughter chimed in. *"It's not bread. It's Jesus! You can't be allergic to God!"* And my jaw dropped. Out of the mouths of babes... I was speechless in amazement at my daughter's prescience. "Is that true, Dad?" my son asked. "Yes, son," was all I could say, I was so in awe of my daughter. When the gospel says that we must accept the kingdom of God like a little child, this is what it means!

Now, how can I say that I believe in Jesus but deny He is present in the one thing He left us that unites us all, the Eucharist?

I was praying before the Eucharist once in our Perpetual Adoration chapel when I was suddenly seized with doubt. What if the Eucharist was just a flat piece of bread, nothing but a cracker? I was terrified! It was the middle of the night and I was very much alone. It was sheer agony! My entire life collapsed! If God was not present in the Eucharist then the scriptures were a lie, and Christianity was a bad joke. All life was meaningless! Like St. Paul said, we are the most miserable of men if Christ did not rise, for our belief is untrue. Jesus was a liar. I started to sweat. I couldn't breathe. My chest hurt so much I thought I was having a heart attack. I kept praying for faith to believe. I was in tears. It was my own personal agony in the garden.

This only went on for about an hour but it seemed like forever (*Could you not watch one hour with me?*). Then it passed. God's grace came through. It suddenly made no sense for anything but God to be present in the Eucharist since the very existence of the world made no sense without God!

And if He made everything in the world in its amazing complexity, then He most certainly was present in the Eucharist he had created. The Church and the scriptures tell me so. Nothing else about God's creation is a lie. Why would He say, *This is my body. This is my blood*, and not mean it?

But this is a matter of belief. You can't prove it. My brothers, pray for faith everyday. Pray for wisdom. Pray for unity. And when Wisdom tells you we are to be unified in Christ, go where they believe the Eucharist is the *real Body and Blood of Christ*. Nothing could be more unifying than that.

Remember, it was right after the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper that Jesus prayed for the unity of all His followers! This did not happen at random. It was Jesus' last prayer! It flows logically that He would give us **His Body and Blood** and then pray for us to be united as one. The two go together.

Do this in memory of me, He said. And so every hour of every day, somewhere in the world, the Eucharist is being celebrated. *When I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself*, Jesus told us.

What do you think happens when the Eucharist is celebrated? **The Lord's Body and Blood** are *lifted up* before your very eyes! It is both a symbol, and the real presence of Christ. Doesn't that draw you irresistibly toward Him? Doesn't that make you hungry for the Lord? And doesn't that make you feel like you're part of something bigger than yourself? I believe they call that the **Mystical Body of Christ!**

*Praise be to you,
O Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ!*

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