



EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL



Introduction to Active Participation

In the Second Vatican Council's document on the sacred liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, the Council wrote, "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people (1 Peter 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism'" (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, 14).

In recent decades, there has been a lot of misunderstanding and/or misemphasis on what this "fully conscious and active participation" actually is about. Some people argue that this concerns being able to do things, like be an altar server, lector, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. Others want to focus almost exclusively on the interior participation that should take place during Mass. Yet, the Council itself says, "With zeal and patience, pastors of souls must promote the liturgical

instruction of the faithful, and also their active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally" (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, 19). Here, it is clear that there are multiple levels of things going on at the same time.

Thus, in the next few months, I want to describe some of the history of how active participation has come to be understood in the Church as well as give practical ways in which we can more actively and consciously participate in the Mass and other liturgical actions.

If "the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy" should consider "this full and active participation by all the people ... before all else," then it seems worth delving into (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, 14). In this way, we will be able to be more present to Christ in the Mass, and His graces will more completely transform our lives so that we can rest with Him forever in His heavenly homeland.

In the newborn Christ,

Fr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

History of Active Participation, Part I



In reference to the liturgy, the history of the term “active participation” begins with Pope St. Pius X’s *Tra le sollecitudini* in 1903. There, the Holy Father wrote this *Motu proprio* (a document that is often meant to change practices in the life of the Church or make a change to something like the *Code of Canon Law*) to address certain abuses concerning liturgical music. His main goal was to refocus the liturgy on Christ in a dignified and reverent way.

In *Tra le sollecitudini*, Pius X spoke about providing for the “sanctity and dignity” of the church, where the faithful gather to grow in the Christian spirit from the “foremost and indispensable font, which is the active participation in the most holy mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church” (introduction). In other words, active participation in the various public prayers of the Church is about helping Christians to grow in holiness. That is the whole goal of participating in the liturgy.

At the very beginning of the Church’s contemporary articulation of what participation in the liturgy is about,

we see a very clear statement that is focused on holiness. This perspective can be so helpful as a means to ground ourselves, both the priest and the people. To see that the primary goal of our participation in the prayers of the Church is actually about holiness is something that we might take for granted. For instance, we might be attentive to the intention for Mass when it is mentioned aloud, but are we praying that that living person might be growing in holiness or that the deceased person might be being purified? With our own personal intentions that we bring to the Mass, are we praying for that person or situation throughout the Mass so that holiness will be increased? Pius X’s words challenge us to be more attentive to what we are praying for at Mass.

When it comes to it, prayer in this way is such a beautiful gift that we can offer on behalf of other or even for ourselves. Through our participation in the liturgy, may souls be sanctified!

In the newborn Christ,

Fr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

History of Active Participation, Part II



When Pope Ven. Pius XII spoke of participating in the liturgy in *Mediator Dei* in 1947, he pointed out that the various ways of participating in the liturgy had one chief end: “to foster and promote the people’s piety and intimate union with Christ and His visible minister and to arouse those internal sentiments and dispositions which should make our hearts become like to that of the High Priest of the New Testament” (106). Each of the ways that we participate—whether it is through readings, homilies, the annual cycle of Christ’s mysteries, vestments, or sacred rites (101) or through responses and singing (105)—are about reproducing “in our hearts the likeness of the divine Redeemer” (102).

Just like St. Pius X before him, Ven. Pius XII also show the deeper spiritual meaning to active participation. First and foremost, it is about our conformity to Christ the Redeemer. Now, this is possible through various forms of prayer, and I spoke at length about that in our Parish Study this past Lent. What Pius XII focuses on in particular, though, is that through the Mass we are able to offer ourselves to God in union with the offering of the priest: “with the High Priest and through Him they

offer themselves as a spiritual sacrifice, that each one’s faith ought to become more ready to work through charity, his piety more real and fervent, and each one should consecrate himself to the furthering of the divine glory, desiring to become as like as possible to Christ” (99). This does not mean that the people offer the same sacrifice that the priest does. Rather, it is about the offering of themselves, their cares, their intentions, their sick family members, their struggles in the workplace, their joy over a new child, etc (see 104). In a sense, it is about the laity offering everything touching their lives along with the sacrifice of Christ offered by the priest so that every part of their lives may be sanctified by the graces flowing from the Mass.

This is a beautiful foundation that undergirds the deeper sense of active participation. The main aim is for our conformity to Christ through offering ourselves and the whole of our lives in union with Him and His sacrifice. May we be given the grace to do just that!

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

History of Active Participation, Part III



There is a famous line from Vatican II concerning active participation that is frequently invoked in contemporary discussions of the topic: “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14).

There is something striking here that often gets overlooked in these conversations though—how baptism plays into this. According to St. Thomas, baptism configures the soul to be able to receive the other sacraments (*ST III*, 63, 3, corp.; *ST III*, q. 63, a. 6, corp.). Now, this is to be distinguished from confirmation, which configures the soul to be able to act as an agent of the Church (*ST III* 70, q.5, a. 5, ad 2). In other words, baptism shapes our souls so that they can be receptive to God’s graces, especially those coming through the other sacraments rather than leads us to serve the Church; confirmation does that.

Sacrosanctum concilium continues with a beautiful line that dives more deeply into this: “In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit”

(*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14). This sounds quite similar to what both St. Pius X and Ven. Pius XII said was at the heart of participating in the liturgy. It is about growing in “the true Christian spirit.”

Sacrosanctum concilium again builds on this: “The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful...through a good understanding of the rites and prayers...should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God’s word and be nourished at the table of the Lord’s body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all” (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, 48). This too sounds remarkably familiar to the previous popes’ articulations of the topic.

As we continue to reflect on how we can more actively participate in the Mass, may the Lord help us through our baptismal character to receive the sacraments worthily, to grow in the “true Christian spirit,” and to offer ourselves along with the sacrifice of Christ offered on the altar.

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

History of Active Participation, Part IV



In addition to Vatican II's comment on "fully conscious, and active participation" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14), the Council also stated: "To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 30).

This idea is built on something that Pope Ven. Pius XII had already described in *Mediator Dei*: "The worship rendered by the Church to God must be, in its entirety, interior as well as exterior. It is exterior because the nature of man as a composite of body and soul requires it to be so" (*Mediator Dei*, 23; see also *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 19). Here, Pius XII grounds this wholistic approach to worship on the reality that we are composites of body and soul, a truth that is given new meaning in light of the Son of God's taking on a human body. Because of the Incarnation, Christ sanctifies all aspects of human life, and so the body itself is able to enter into the divine worship in a newly grace-filled way. On top of this, Pius XII pointed out that the exterior actions of the body should be seen as flowing from the interior actions, which are of chief importance (*Mediator Dei*, 24).

This seems to be the best context for understanding how the body should be used during the Mass and what should be at the heart of the "acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, ... actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes" of which

Vatican II spoke. All of our actions—standing, sitting, kneeling, processing, striking our breast during the *Confiteor*, etc.—should flow from our interior life. Kneeling should reflect a state of humility, sitting should reflect a receptivity to God, singing and speaking should reflect a desire to publicly profess what has interiorly welled up in our hearts, processing should reflect a sense of moving from this life to the next, and so forth. In other words, all that we do physically should be united to an interior state where we gaze upon the Lord in loving adoration and with receptivity to His providence and His grace.

This is most important when it comes to receiving Holy Communion, which Vatican II described as "that more perfect form of participation in the Mass" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 55). In approaching the minister for Holy Communion, whether on the tongue or in the hand, we should come with an attitude of receptivity. Both our external reception and our response of "Amen" should exteriorly manifest what is going on in our hearts, namely that we desire to receive from the goodness of God and to entrust ourselves to His loving care.

May we be given the graces to participate in the Mass worthily and reverently, with bodily actions that reveal a deep, interior union with the Lord so that the whole of our lives truly can be an "Amen" to the Lord.

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

History of Active Participation, Part V



Before moving on from Vatican II, there is one more quote worth examining. As previously mentioned, the Council stated “The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 48). When I wrote about this a few weeks ago, I was emphasizing how the point of active participation is the “true Christian spirit” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14). That is true and of great importance.

That being said, the translation given above, even though it is the official one from the Vatican, is actually misleading. During the deliberations over this text at the Council, the translation above reflects the original proposed text. However, an intervention was made to change some of the wording to get to a deeper reality. Rather than, “through a good understanding of the rites and prayers,” the actual Latin text that was approved is better translated as “understanding the mystery well through rites and prayers.”

Now why does this matter? It matters because it refocuses that in which we are participating. Through our participation,

we are not entering into the texts of the rites and prayers. Rather, we are entering into the very Paschal Mystery itself. Through our participation in the Holy Mass, we are entering into the very moment in which our redemption is brought about. You see, in the Mass, Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension are presented again. This mystery is not symbolically represented, but rather it is presented once again, re-presented, to us so that we can partake of its fruits. Yes, understanding the rites and prayers helps us to do this, and having a knowledge of the feast days and the lives of the saints can help us to draw more fruit on certain days of the year. Yet, all throughout the year, we have the chance to enter into the Paschal Mystery each and every day, and when we understand that *mystery* well, it is then that we can appropriate its fruits.

As we now enter into the Lenten Season, when we prepare for our celebration of the Sacred Paschal Triduum, may the Lord grant us many graces to prayerfully reflect on the texts and readings of the Mass and the Holy Week liturgies so that through them we might more fully enter into the Paschal Mystery and partake of its redemptive fruits.

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

History of Active Participation, Part VI



While I would like to treat together the various writings on active participation from Pope St. Paul VI, which actually began even during the Second Vatican Council, there are two related documents to discuss first.

Right before Pope Ven. Pius XII died, he approved an Instruction called *De Musica Sacra* (1958). This document follows the tradition of having a distinction between sung Masses [both Solemn Masses and Sung (or High) Masses fit into this category] and read (or Low) Masses. Furthermore, within each of these types of Masses, different parts of the Mass are prioritized for what should be sung and when.

After Vatican II, a post-Conciliar Consilium (yes, that is a tongue twister) was set up and tasked with implementing the teachings of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. In their document *Musicam Sacram* (1967), they reaffirm *De Musica Sacra*'s multitier approach to what is sung and when (*Musicam Sacram*, 28-36). Furthermore, *Musicam Sacram* grounds this in both the interior and exterior forms of participation we have been examining (*Musicam Sacram*, 15). Here, they once again point out that the exterior participation should reveal the deeper interior participation (*Musicam Sacram*, 15b). The document even goes so far as to say, "The faithful should also be taught to unite themselves interiorly to what the ministers or choir sing, so that by listening to them they may raise their minds to God" (*Musicam Sacram*, 15).

Okay, but why is this important? All of this helps us to see that whether or not we are

exteriorly saying or doing something during the Mass, all those present are called to participate in their own appropriate way. The priest, the people, the choir, the servers, the lectors—all of them have their functions to pray. Sometimes these overlap, such as when everyone says together, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed" or when everyone observes a communal silence right before the opening Collect. At other times when the choir is singing or when a lector is proclaiming a reading, the rest of the congregation is invited into a contemplative interior participation.

Moreover, this is also important because it is an invitation to enter into the same part of the Mass in different ways on different days. For instance, when we recite the Entrance Antiphon at a Low Mass or hear the choir sing it at a Solemn Mass, in both of those instances, we can actively participate, albeit in different ways.

Since the time I arrived a year and a half ago, I have found the Parish's custom of this threefold structure of Solemn, Sung, and Low Masses, to be a beautiful way to enter into these different types of Masses and pray along with you all as we are drawn deeper into communion with the Lord. As we come closer to the liturgies of Holy Week, may our interior and exterior participation bear great fruit in our souls and lead us safely on the path to heaven.

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

History of Active Participation, Part VII



In a number of ways, we see Pope St. Paul VI's attentiveness to questions surrounding the liturgy. Even during the Second Vatican Council, he issued a *motu proprio* in 1964 (*Sacram Liturgiam*) and an encyclical in 1965 (*Mysterium Fidei*) to address questions surround the liturgy and the Eucharist. All throughout his pontificate, he states again and again, that participation in the liturgy should be both interior and exterior, and that education about the liturgy is one of the best ways to foster this participation.

Paul VI is often known both for increasing the use of the vernacular in the liturgy and also for suppressing the minor orders and establishing the ministries of acolyte and lector [for the latter, see: *Ministerium Quedam* (1973)]. For some, these are the fundamental ways to understand Paul VI's contribution to the questions of active participation. Yet, I think that misses Paul VI's actual emphasis, which seems even more clearly to be about how we can more deeply enter into the saving mysteries. For Paul VI, active participation is not focused on doing but on being transformed by the graces flowing from the liturgy.

For instance, Paul VI writes, "The Liturgy is a communion of minds, of prayers, of voices, of agape, that is of charity. Passive assistance at the celebration is not enough; participation is required. The people must consider the liturgical celebration as a school, where one listens and learns; as a sacred action presented and guided by the priest, but in which, a multitude of living and faithful hearts contributes, responding, offering, praying, and

singing. . . .Whoever sings, participates; whoever participates is not bored but enjoys; whoever enjoys prayer is preserved, indeed develops as a Christian; and whoever is a Christian is saved" (General Audience, 6 August 1975). Here, just like we saw in previous documents, the end goal is salvation.

Yes, Paul VI does indeed have a greater emphasis on the laity singing. Still, the whole goal of actively participating in the liturgy—whether through singing; through responding, offering, or praying; or through listening and learning—is that the Christian can be saved. Paul VI says that unlike modern theatrical and cinematographic entertainment, "in the liturgical representation not only is the memory of Christ's deeds and words recalled, but his saving action is made operative" (General Audience, 26 March 1975; here, he explicitly references: St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, III, 56, 1 ad 3). In other words, by participating in the liturgy in each and every way that we participate, we actually take a place in the saving actions of Christ and appropriate their fruits.

As we continue to draw closer to Holy Week, may the Lord grant us the graces "to consider ourselves guests at the Last Supper, [to be] present at the *Via Crucis*, [and to be] dazzled by the mysterious apparitions of the risen Jesus" (Paul VI, General Audience, 26 March 1975).

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Youngworth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

History of Active Participation, Part VIII



During the Pontificate of St. John Paul II, we see a very interesting use of the term participation. Diving deeper than his predecessors, John Paul II builds on a rich Thomistic foundation of the term itself. For him, participation is not simply about the interior and exterior things that are being done that should lead to a life of holiness. Rather, for John Paul II, participation is about being joined to the very life of God.

In various writings, St. John Paul II speaks of how man's sharing in God's knowledge, wisdom, eternal life, and so forth all make for a "participated theonomy" (*Veritatis Splendor*, 41) by which "human life becomes permeated, through participation, by the divine life, and itself acquires a divine, supernatural dimension" (*Donum et Vivificantem*, 52; see also: *Dives et Misericordiae*, 7; *Christifidelis Laici*, 18; *Redemptoris Missio*, 7; *Veritatis Splendor*, 12).

This idea of entering into the very life of God contextualizes how St. John Paul II sees prayer and participation at Mass. Firstly, prayer is the means to communion with God. John Paul II writes, "Prayer through the power of the Holy Spirit becomes the ever more mature expression of the new man, who by means of this prayer participates in the divine life" (*Donum et Vivificantem*, 65). In other words, it is through prayer that we participate and share in the very life of God.

Secondly, liturgical prayer becomes the way to enter into the Paschal Mystery, which is the not only the means to our sanctification and freedom from sin but also to our union

with the inner life of the Trinity. St. John Paul II states, "This call of the Lord to us through His Sacrifice opens our hearts, so that, purified in the mystery of our Redemption, they may be united to Him in Eucharistic Communion, which confers upon participation at Mass a value that is mature, complete and binding on human life" (*Dominicae Cena*, 9). Furthermore, "the Sacraments make us sharers in divine life, and provide the spiritual strength necessary to experience life, suffering, and death in their fullest meaning. Thanks to a genuine rediscovery and a better appreciation of the significance of these rites, our liturgical celebrations, especially celebrations of the Sacraments, will be ever more capable of expressing the full truth about birth, life, suffering and death, and will help us to live these moments as a participation in the Paschal Mystery of the Crucified and Risen Christ" (*Evangelium Vitae*, 84). How beautiful it is to see that participation at Mass is not only about sharing in the fruits that Christ won for us on the Cross but also about entering into the eternal gift of self in which Jesus' perfectly and perpetually offers Himself to the Father.

Now that the Easter Season has begun, may we offer prayers of thanksgiving to God for the beauty of His providential plan by which we can be intimately united to Him through the sacrifice of the Mass.

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

History of Active Participation, Part IX



What we looked at last week in the thought of St. John Paul II—how participation in the liturgy is about being joined to the very life of God—has deep roots in the saint’s thought, and I think that this will help us understand even more clearly what it means to actively participate in the liturgy.

The Acting Person, which then-Karol Wojtyła wrote in 1969 before he was elected Pope John Paul II but after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, interplays beautifully with the Council’s teaching about how man should be an actual participant rather than a mere spectator during the celebration of the Mass. In the work’s final chapter, Wojtyła speaks about how there should be a personalistic value to every human action. In other words, the person should interiorly and consciously intend to be an agent, a doer, someone fully present to the action. There should be a self-determination, rather than being subject to a coercive force or a go-with-the-flow mentality, that leads to an authentic human action. When this is done well, Wojtyła points out that man is able both to be an individual willingly choosing to be part of a communal action and also to be part of a community that is acting together.

Granted, here Wojtyła is not speaking about liturgical participation, but his ideas do apply very well to the Church’s understanding of active participation and seems to be part of the background of his thought that we examined last week. If participation in the liturgy has union with God as its final end and

if through the liturgy we, even now, begin to share in the very life of God, then Wojtyła’s ideas in *The Acting Person* provide a beautiful explanation of how this comes to be. For when we willingly and personally intend to enter into the sacrifice of the Mass, rather than just passively attend it, then the graces of the Mass can transform our lives. Here, this idea is true regardless of the language used at the Mass or how much or how little the congregation speaks aloud during the Mass. Rather, this aspect is about the interior and intentional participation that someone has in the very action that is happening, which is the foundation for our participation in the Trinitarian exchange of love that takes place in Christ’s self-offering to the Father. In other words, by intentionally and desirously entering into what the Mass is itself, we can participate in the very life and love of the Trinitarian God.

The more we understand what the Mass is the more that we will be able to fully and consciously participate in it. Hence, this is why we are spending so much time reflecting on how we can better enter into the Mass. May the Lord grant us many graces to aid our study, our reflection, and our prayer on this topic so that we truly may be able to fully, consciously, willingly, and intentionally participate in the Son’s perfect gift of Himself to the Father each and every time we come to Mass.

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

History of Active Participation, Part X



Regarding the liturgy, Pope Benedict is probably most known for his *motu proprio* titled *Summorum Pontificum* (July 7, 2007), which allowed for widespread use of the Missal of 1962 that was promulgated by Pope St. John XXIII. Interestingly enough, neither that *motu proprio* nor its accompanying letter actually speak of active participation in the liturgy. Rather, to get a sense of Pope Benedict's thought about active participation, it is important to look at his work *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, which he wrote in 2005 while he was still Cardinal Ratzinger.

Similarly to how St. John Paul II sought to get to a deeper meaning of active participation, so too did Pope Benedict. In *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, he asks the question about what we are participating in. What exactly is it? His answer: the *actio* of God. Then-Cardinal Ratzinger says, "By the *actio* of the liturgy the sources mean the Eucharistic Prayer. The real liturgical action, the true liturgical act, is the *oratio*, the great prayer that forms the core of the Eucharistic celebration, the whole of which was, therefore, called *oratio* by the Fathers... The real 'action' in the liturgy in which we are all supposed to participate is the action of God Himself" (pgs. 171-172, 173). In other words, in this *actio* and *oratio*, we enter into the very action of the Son of God praying to and offering Himself to the Father. This is not our work properly

speaking. Rather it is God's work that we enter into and in which we participate.

Ratzinger also points out that similarly to how "the elements of earth are transubstantiated, pulled, so to speak, from their creaturely anchorage, grasped at the deepest ground of their being, and changed into the Body and Blood of the Lord," so too are we changed when we enter into the *actio* of God (pg. 173). Ratzinger says, "True, the Sacrifice of the Logos is accepted already and forever. But we must still pray for it to become *our* sacrifice, that we ourselves, as we said, may be transformed into the Logos (*logisiert*), conformed to the Logos, and so be made the true Body of Christ" (pg. 173). In other words, similarly to Ven. Pius XII's description in *Mediator Dei*, by uniting ourselves and all that we experience in life to Christ's self-offering, we are transformed by God's action working on us. The liturgy is about God's action, and we actively participate in that when we prayerfully and intentionally pray with Christ.

May we give thanks to the Son for His perfect self-offering to the Father, and may we enter into that most beautiful action during each and every Mass.

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.



EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL



History of Active Participation, Part XI

Pope Francis, like St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict before him, has offered an additional aspect to understanding what it means to participate in the liturgy. At this point in his pontificate, it seems that Pope Francis has focused largely on formation connected with the liturgy.

First, he speaks about how liturgy forms us. He uses a tender example of a parent or grandparent taking a child's hand and showing him or her how to make the sign of the Cross (*Desiderio Desideravi*, 47). Similarly, he speaks about how the priest bows before the altar while saying, "With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God" and how this educates the priest in "humility and contrition" (*DD*, 60). In these two examples, we see a larger reality that the liturgy shapes us to live the Christian life, with the Cross before us and in the humility of the Lord. The Pope speaks about how the liturgy itself is "the first 'teacher' of catechism" because it shapes us by its very actions (*Address to the Schola Cantorum of the Italian Association of Saint Cecilia*, 28 September 2019). In this way, the liturgy "gives us form" and "we are formed by it" (*DD*, 47).

Second, Pope Francis speaks about what the liturgy forms in us: Christ. Following the teachings of the Popes over the course of

the last century, Pope Francis says that the Holy Spirit, "plunging us into the paschal mystery," can "transform every dimension of our life, conforming us more and more to Christ" (*DD*, 21). In other words, when we actively participate in the liturgy, Christ is formed in us. Participation in the liturgy is about "our conformation to Christ" (*DD*, 41).

Finally, Pope Francis speaks about what the liturgy forms us for: evangelization. He boldly says that no one should rest until everyone has received their invitation to the wedding of the Lamb (cf. *DD*, 5). In a particular way, he indicates that music is a beautiful means to evangelize because it "creates bridges, [and] brings people closer, even the most distant," and that "it knows no barriers of nationality, ethnicity, or skin color, but involves everyone in a higher language" (*Address*, 28 September 2019). In other words, not only does the liturgy itself evangelize, but it should also lead us to evangelize others so that they too might enter into the Paschal Mystery and have Christ formed in them.

Through our participation in the Holy Mass, may Christ be formed in us so that we can become His faithful witnesses in the world.

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

History of Active Participation, Conclusion



Francis Cardinal Arinze, in 2004 when he was the Prefect for the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, said, “Full, active, and conscious participation enables the faithful of Christ to reap more abundant fruit from liturgical celebrations. It enables the salvific event of the celebration of Christ’s mysteries to exert more influence in them. It makes possible for them a deeper share in the divine life which Christ the Savior brought all humanity” (quoted in *Cardinal Reflections: Active Participation and the Liturgy* (2005), 21). This beautifully seems to sum up what we have examined during our brief tour of the history of active participation.

From the beginning of our review, the common themes from the Popes and the Second Vatican Council are that active participation is about entering into the Paschal Mystery so that we can be transformed by its very graces. The more that we join ourselves, both interiorly and exteriorly, to Christ’s sacrifice, the more that He will be formed in us. This then will help the offerings we make—ourselves, our sick friends, a thanksgiving for a beautiful grace, or whatever our intention is—to be changed just like the bread and wine by the power of God’s graces. Furthermore, all of this leads us into the very life of God Himself which guides us to the ultimate goal of active participation: our salvation.

This is elucidated by the idea in Vatican II and the writings of many Popes that the

reception of Holy Communion is “that more perfect form of participation in the Mass” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 55). Very clearly, the goal of active participation and the transformation in Christ that comes through it are brought to perfection when we actually commune with Christ, when we enter into communion with Him through Holy Communion, and when the graces of the Eucharist transform us from within. Thus, if the point of active participation is to participation in the eternal and perfect sacrificial self-offering of the Son of God to God the Father, then the best way to enter into that is through coming into perfect communion with the Son through receiving Holy Communion.

Through the summer, we will dive more deeply into the importance of the Eucharist in the Mass. We will look at how the Eucharist leads us into communion with both God and the Church, how we can more adequately prepare for Communion, and some practical advice on how to receive Communion reverently.

As we prepare to enter into the second year of the Eucharistic Revival on Corpus Christi, may our minds and hearts continue to be opened to the riches of the Lord’s presence among us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, the Most Holy Eucharist.

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL



Participation and Holy Communion, Part I

With the feast of Corpus Christi this year, we hit the one year mark of the Eucharistic Revival. We have reflected on silence and its place within Mass. We have looked at a brief history of the idea of active participation in the liturgy and there seen that the most perfect form of active participation is the reception of Holy Communion. It seems providential to begin a series on the reception of Holy Communion, then, on this great feast day.

To understand the importance of receiving Communion, it would be helpful to say a few words about the Eucharist, which has its foundation in Jesus' words in the Gospels.

There are two important Biblical passages that are helpful to read together. First, there is the Bread of Life Discourse in John 6 where Jesus says, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh...Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (Jn 6:51, 53-56). Second, there are Jesus' words at the Last Supper: "Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the

forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:26-28).

The Eucharist is Jesus' very Body and Blood. Through priestly ordination, the priest is given the power, flowing out from the graces of the Resurrection and the graces given to the apostles (cf. Jn 20:19-23), to consecrate the Eucharist and transubstantiate ordinary bread and wine into Jesus' Body and Blood. Through the words that the priest says at Mass—the same words Jesus said at the Last Supper—Jesus acts through the priest to bring this about. Even though the Host and the Precious Blood still look like bread and wine, their underlying reality, their very substance, is changed into Jesus' Body and Blood. As St. Ambrose said, "You read concerning the making of the whole world: *He spoke and they were made, He commanded and they were created.* Shall not the word of Christ, which was able to make out of nothing that which was not, be able to change things which already are into what they were not? For it is not less to give a new nature to things than to change them" (*On the Mysteries*, chapter 9.53).

If Jesus' words are true and if they actually have effect on our altars at each and every Mass, then the Eucharist becomes the most beautiful means for entering into interior communion with God. We will spend the next couple of months unpacking this and how we might better prepare ourselves to enter into a holy communion with the living God.

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Youngwith, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL



Participation and Holy Communion, Part II

People often wonder why Catholics have regulations about who can receive Communion. There is actually a very beautiful teaching undergirding this. It is all about an interior communion with both God and His Church.

It is important to have communion with both God, a sort of vertical communion, and with His Church, a sort of horizontal communion. Communion in these ways is about union with God and His Church through believing what the Lord teaches and living in accord with His commandments. Thus, when we do both of these things, we are free to present ourselves for Holy Communion and enter into a deeper union with the Lord. However, those who fall out of communion with the teachings or commandments of God and His Church should refrain from presenting themselves for Communion until they can be reunited with the Lord.

Granted, sometimes there are Catholics who struggle either with belief in the Lord's teachings or with living out His commandments. Neither of these situations mean that the person should not come to Mass. Rather, those particular situations should become invitations to grow deeper in the search for Truth and in seeking to live a faithful Christian life. Even while that is being worked out, the person is welcome to come to Mass. There are beautiful graces that flood our hearts at Mass even if we do not receive Communion.

Ultimately, both of these aspects of communion—communion with God and with His Church—are important for being able to receive Holy Communion because both of

them reveal a deeper interior communion that is already at hand in their hearts. It is that deeper interior communion in faith and charity that is the foundation for the exterior act of receiving our Lord's Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

All this being said, there is also a distinction to be made between struggling to understand one of the Church's teachings and simply rejecting it. For someone who is legitimately trying to understand something, whether doctrinal or moral, and is studying, asking questions, praying about it and so forth, the reception of Holy Communion can be a helpful means to be flooded with grace and come to a greater understanding and acceptance of what Christ and His Church teach. Rejecting a teaching of the Church, though, is a different situation. Doing that creates a break in the interior communion with God and His Church, and so those who reject an important teaching of the faith should refrain from presenting themselves for Communion until the time when they can come back into that interior communion with the Lord and His Church.

As we enter more deeply into these summer months, when some of the hecticness of the working world slows down, may the Lord grant us many graces to examine our minds and hearts so that being more completely purified, we may be drawn more deeply into communion with Him and His Church and thus enter into a more perfect communion with Him through Holy Communion.

In Christ,

Fr. Peter Martyr Youngworth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL



Participation and Holy Communion, Part III

In 1333, Bl. Imelda Lambertini received a profound, yet strange, First Communion gift. She had entered a Dominican monastery of cloistered nuns outside of Bologna when she was only nine years old, and she greatly desired to receive Holy Communion. At the time, the age for First Communion was fourteen, and so she was told she needed to wait. Yet, the Lord did not want her to wait that long, and so after she turned eleven, He worked a miracle for her. One day after prayers had ended, Imelda was nowhere to be found. The nuns went back and found her in the chapel adoring a Eucharistic Host that was floating above her head. They quickly called the chaplain who came, took the Host, and gave Imelda her First Communion. At that moment, she passed away and went to the Lord where she entered into perfect communion with Him.

Only nine years later in Florence, the Lord called another, St. Juliana Falconieri. She had helped found the cloistered Servite Nuns and had served Him well. At the time of her death, she could not receive any food or drink, and there was no way for her receive viaticum, her Final Communion. So, the chaplain placed a corporal on her chest and laid the Host on top of it. At least this way, she would be able to enter into a period of adoration of the Lord. At the moment of her death, though, the Host disappeared, and when her body was later examined by the sisters, the markings on the Host were in the exact same spot on her chest.

Last week, we reflected on having a beautiful interior communion with the Lord and how that is the basis for our ability to receive Holy Communion. I think we see this in both Bl.

Imelda and St. Juliana. From First Communion to Final Communion, they show what it is like to have a heart prepared to receive God. Their hearts were open to His will in all things. Not only did they radically give themselves to Him in their vocations as cloistered nuns (albeit Bl. Imelda died before she was old enough to make her vows), but they also attuned their minds and hearts to His truth and love. They sought His will above all things, and, more than anything else, to be united to Him. The miracles at the time of their deaths are visible signs of the Lord's response to such a loving gift of self. He too desired that they be in communion with Him, and so He brought it about in miraculous ways.

In a similar way, the Lord desires that we enter into a deep communion with Him. While we almost assuredly will not have miraculous Eucharistic deaths, the Lord does desire that we attune our minds and hearts to His truth and love. He craves to quench our thirst for Him and wants to give Himself to us. Yet, He knows that only with minds and hearts that have been made pure is this truly possible, and so He gives us graces to lead to a deeper conversion. Through this process, aided by study and prayer, we slowly are transformed bit by bit so that our hearts too will be prepared to receive God. In the end, the goal is to be in a perfect interior communion with God. May He bring this about in all of our lives.

In Christ,

Fr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL



Participation and Holy Communion, Part IV

Why is there a Eucharistic Fast? The Church teaches that “a person who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before holy communion from any food and drink, except for only water and medicine” [*Code of Canon Law*, 919 §1; there is an exception: “the elderly, the infirm, and those who care for them can receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have eaten something within the preceding hour” (*CIC*, 919 §3)]. But, why this regulation?

The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (often called the *Roman Catechism*) speaks about how it is important to prepare ourselves for Communion both in spirit and in body. There is more to come on the spiritual preparation in a couple of weeks, but for now I would like to focus on the bodily preparation.

The contemporary *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “To prepare for worthy reception of this sacrament, the faithful should observe the fast required in their Church. Bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest” (*CCC*, 1387). Here, we see that there are two aspects to our bodily preparation: both our outward comportment and demeanor and also our interior fasting. I can remember at the very beginning of COVID when two of my friends were going to watch a livestream Mass. They had just sat down in their living room, and then the husband ran upstairs. His wife had no idea what was going on, but after a few minutes he returned. He had changed into his normal Sunday church clothes and explained that if he was actually going to take this seriously, then he needed to put himself in a place to make that hour different than the other hours in their house. In this same way, what we wear to church matters because it reorients our hearts to see that something different is going on. Just as we dress

up for a wedding or a funeral because of the solemn nature and the importance of the day, so too should we approach the Lord at all times with a beautiful sense of dignity reflected in our choice of clothing. The old idea of the “Sunday best” was about making the Lord’s Day different than the other days of the week and showing respect to the Lord as we entered His house on Sunday.

Similarly, the Eucharistic fast is meant to prepare our bodies to receive the Lord who has come to dwell within us. By denying ourselves anything other than water and medicine, we open ourselves up to a longing to receive Him, a longing that is deeper than for a breakfast pastry, a delicious cup of tea, or anything else.

Before the updates to Canon Law in 1983, the old fasting regulation was to begin fasting from midnight the night before receiving Communion. The current *Code of Canon Law* has reduced that to one hour. Even with that requirement, it might be worth considering whether a three-hour Eucharistic fast would be better. For longer Masses, a one-hour fast basically means you should not be eating when you arrive at church, but a three-hour fast would help to refocus our hearts some hours before the Mass begins, which would help our preparations to take greater root in hearts, give us a deepened longing for Communion, and cultivate a greater disposition of love when we actually receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

Even in our physical preparations, the Lord can prepare us for deeper communion with Him. May He do just that!

In Christ,

Fr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL



Participation and Holy Communion, Part V

One of my friends in college loved going to Confession. I can remember when she started the practice again after many years of not going, she would come into the library at the Catholic Student Center doing cartwheels. When we asked her why she was so happy, she elatedly said because she had just been absolved from her sins. While we might not all have this sort of reaction after coming out of the confessional, it does reveal something quite profound. God's grace of forgiveness is incredible, and the sacrament of confession restores us to peace and a state of grace. Simply put, that is amazing.

Confession is so important if we fall away from the Lord, especially before receiving Communion. The *Code of Canon Law* states, "A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition which includes the resolution of confessing as soon as possible" (CIC, 916). Why does the Church have such a strong sense of confessing before communing when someone is in a state of mortal sin?

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, "Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him" (CCC, 1855). Now, for a sin to be mortal, there are three conditions that all must be present: the "object is grave matter," and the sin is "committed with full knowledge and [with] deliberate consent" (CCC, 1857). In other words, when we willingly commit a sin that completely separates us from God, we are no longer in a state to receive His most precious gift of Holy Communion. Through confession, though, we can have a "radical reorientation

of our whole life," with hearts re-ordered back to God (CCC, 1431). In that way, we can "recover the grace of justification" and live in the Lord's good graces once again (CCC, 1446).

What counts as grave matter, though? We might often think of big things like adultery, murder, and rape, but there are many other serious sins too. St. Paul gives a fairly helpful list: "fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dis-sension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21). While I do not intend to offer a comprehensive list here, the most common things seem to be: missing Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, masturbation, contraception, and any other sexual sins outside of marriage. Practicing the occult, which is a serious violation of the 1st Commandment, seems to be an increasing trend. Depending on the intensity, other sins could also be grave. For instance, lying is always sinful. While a little white lie is not necessarily grave, though, a serious lie would be. If you would like to learn more about this, then our Parish Study starting this Tuesday will be a great means to grow in knowledge and hopefully holiness.

Thanks be to God we offer a lot of confession hours in the Parish. I am so grateful to the generosity of the priests in both parishes to help make this possible, and I hope that it can bear much fruit in the lives of our parishioners. Through this wonderful sacrament, may the Lord make us more and more prepared to receive the fruits of Holy Communion.

In Christ,

Fr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL



Participation and Holy Communion, Part VI

When the apostles received their First Communion at the Last Supper, they had been prepared for a period of three years. In listening to Jesus' preaching, in witnessing His miracles, and in seeing His charity and compassion, their hearts and minds were open to the various gifts that He desired to pour out upon them. At the beginning of the Last Supper, He offered one final act of preparation: He washed their feet. It was a final act of cleansing to prepare them for the gift of His Body and Blood.

This was also instructive for us. *The Roman Catechism* says that Jesus washed the apostles' feet "to show that we must use extreme diligence before Holy Communion in order to approach it with the greatest purity and innocence of soul" (ch. 7). Over the past two weeks, we have looked at preparing ourselves for Holy Communion by making sure that we have prepared our body through fasting, our comportment, and our dress as well as by making sure that our souls are clean from grave sin. So how do we make sure that we are approaching the Eucharist "with the greatest purity and innocence of soul"?

First, we can ask ourselves: are we at peace with others? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Mt. 5:23-24). The same would apply if our brother has done something against us, and we need to forgive him. Actively seeking

to forgive and seeking forgiveness are very fruitful ways to open our hearts to receive the deeper graces of the Lord that He desires to give us in Communion.

Moreover, we should ask ourselves if we can truly say with St. Peter, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (Jn. 21: 17). It is so helpful to examine how deeply we love the Lord and ask Him for the grace that we may grow deeper in our love for and our dependence on Him. The greater that we enter into Communion with a heart filled with love, the more fruits that we will receive from Him.

Finally, it is good to prepare ourselves before Mass begins by reading the readings and liturgical prayers of the day's Mass, especially the text of the Eucharistic Prayer. This will help us to receive the word of God with open hearts and to more deeply join our prayers to those of the priest offering the Mass. In doing this, we will more completely benefit from what the Mass can do in our hearts. Our hearts will become more open to God's grace, which will then more worthily dispose us to receive the fruits of communing with the Lord through Holy Communion.

At each and every Mass, may we more worthily prepare our souls for the graces that the Lord desires to pour out upon us so that He can strengthen us in this life and prepare us for the next.

In Christ,

Jr. Peter Martyr Youngwith, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL



Participation and Holy Communion, Part VII

Having spent the last few weeks speaking about preparing ourselves for the reception of Holy Communion, it will be helpful to say a few words about the practicalities of receiving Communion. This week I want to say a few words about receiving on the tongue, and next week I will share some thoughts about receiving on the hand.

The more ancient practice of receiving Communion likely was to receive on the hand. Within the first few centuries of the Church, though, it seems that receiving on the tongue became more widespread and then the universal norm (it is still the norm in the Eastern Churches). The reasoning for this was twofold: to avoid dropping the Eucharist and to increase devotion among the faithful for the Eucharist. First, there was a desire to protect the Eucharist from being dropped (as still happens even now) as well as from someone walking off with the Eucharist and not reverently consuming it (which also still happens even now). It is of grave importance to protect the Eucharist from profanation. Still, those situations are not the everyday experience in most churches. Thus, the second reason is the more regular one for the average Catholic.

How does receiving on the tongue increase devotion among the faithful? It is all about an attitude of humility and receptivity. Just think of the Blessed Mother. When she received the Lord into her body at the annunciation, she had a disposition of humility and receptivity. She pondered the words of the angel, not with disbelief but with a desire to be faithful to God. She humbly heard the angel's words and then offered her *fiat*. Similarly, receiving the Lord on the tongue should foster this same disposition. You see in this way the whole physical action is one of receptivity for we do not even bring the Host to our own mouth. Rather, Jesus is placed on our tongue. As we kneel or even stand there receiving from the priest, it is humbling. Yet, in that action, our souls are shaped to become humble and receptive before the Lord.

It is also worthwhile saying a few words about the practicalities of receiving Communion on the tongue. First, when the priest says, "The Body of Christ," it is important to say, "Amen" before trying to receive Communion. Simply say "Amen," and then open your mouth and stick your tongue out a little bit. Please make sure to keep your head still rather than lunging forward or trying to bite the Host. The Host will easily stick to your tongue, and when you receive in this way, the priest will easily be able to place the Host on your tongue without touching your tongue with his hand. If you are also kneeling, it is helpful to *slightly* tilt your head back so that the priest can more easily see your tongue.

Another thing to keep in mind is not to send mixed signals to the priest. If you desire to receive on the tongue, then please do not also stick your hands out as that will confuse the priest. Moreover, while some people like to fold their arms in front of their chest while receiving on the tongue, please do not do it in the shape of an X, as the priest will think that you desire a blessing instead of receiving Communion.

Finally, a word should be said about receiving Communion at the Dominican Rite Masses. At these Masses, the rubrics indicate that the laity are to receive on the tongue. You also do not say "Amen" in response to the priest's words. His formula for distribution includes the word "Amen" at the end.

No matter which way you prefer to receive Holy Communion, may you have a disposition of receptivity and humility so that just as the Lord filled the Blessed Mother with Himself so too may He do for us when we receive Him in Holy Communion.

In Christ,

Fr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL



Participation and Holy Communion, Part VIII

Having written about receiving on the tongue last week, I want to say a few words about receiving on the hand. In *Memoriale Domini* (1969), St. Paul VI allowed for local conferences of bishops to ask permission of the Holy See to implement this method of distributing Communion in their locales. Since then, this practice has become the liturgical norm in the United States (although not to the exclusion of receiving on the tongue), and so it is important to talk about it spiritually and practically.

Receiving Communion on the hand has ancient roots. The USCCB's *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Communion Under Both Kinds*, references the oft-quoted line from St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "When you approach, take care not to do so with your hand stretched out and your fingers open or apart, but rather place your left hand as a throne beneath your right, as befits one who is about to receive the King. Then receive him, taking care that nothing is lost" (*Norms*, 41). The important spiritual aspect here is about turning our hands into a throne for the King of the Universe. He who is our Lord and God has come down to us and has offered Himself to us. Thus, our reception of Him should be with the greatest reverence and deference. If we are to receive on the hands, then our hands should become the place for the King to rest.

On the practical side of things, it is helpful to place your non-dominant hand on the top of your dominant hand and to lay your hands as flat as possible so that the priest can easily place the Host on your hands. If your hands end up like a valley, then the priest might struggle to know how you are planning to consume the Host. Moreover, if there are other Eucharistic particles attached to the Host, they could easily fall on the floor. Now, this can be a challenge in two ways. If you are carrying a baby, it can be difficult to receive with both hands and then self-communicate. It is worth considering receiving on the tongue in situations like this. Secondly, for those who have arthritis or other similar problems in their hands, as age increases, it is important to do your best to lay your hands as flat as possible.

Another challenge exists when someone is carrying

something. It is best not to have anything in your hands when you receive Communion. If you have a tissue or cough drop or something like that, you can put it in your pocket. You could also tuck a bulletin between your arm and your body. For those who use a cane or a walker, normally at least one of the hands will be occupied when approaching to receive Communion. The best thing to do when you arrive at the priest is to stop walking and stand stably before extending your hands. If you have a walker and can let go and stand, then please do that so that you can lift both of your hands to receive Communion. Then after consuming the Host, you can move on. If you have a cane, it seems best to stop walking, place the cane handle over your arm or lean it against your body, receive Communion with both hands, consume the Host, and then begin moving again.

It is also important to note that when the priest says, "The Body of Christ," the proper response is "Amen" (rather than saying nothing or even something like "Thank you"). Not responding with "Amen" will send mixed signals to the priest, and he might wonder if you are Catholic or not and then offer a blessing instead of giving Communion.

One other helpful note is to please receive Communion before moving away from the priest or deacon. It is okay if you need to take a step aside rather than consuming the Host directly in front of the priest, but it is important to not wander off carrying the Host.

Finally, I would like to make one tweak to the Communion lines at St. Vincent Ferrer. For those receiving in the hand, please come up in two lines rather than everyone merging into one line. I think that this can still allow for the distribution of Communion to be reverent, but that it will be more efficient.

May the Lord pour out many graces upon all of us so that our hearts may be like thrones waiting to receive the King of Heaven under our roof.

In Christ,

Fr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL



Participation and Holy Communion, Part IX

We have just spent the last eight weeks reflecting on receiving Holy Communion with a more receptive and well disposed heart. Yet, what is the whole point of this? What is the end that we are trying to achieve in these reflections? At first sight, it might seem that since this series has directly followed our tour through the history of active participation and that since the receiving of Holy Communion is the highest form of active participation, this whole thing has been about us trying to more completely and actively participate in the liturgy. That is true, but it is not the deepest reason. Even more important is the fact that this is all about union with God.

The whole goal of our reception of Holy Communion is about union with God. It is about being transformed by His grace and being conformed to Him so that in all things it is Christ acting within us. In a certain sense, our reception of Holy Communion is about our own sort of transfiguration. For when we receive Holy Communion worthily and devoutly, the Lord transforms us from the inside. He reorients the desires of our hearts so that they can be purified and become “white as light” (Matthew 17:2), and He enlightens our minds so that we can have a greater share in His truth as if our minds were enlightened by the sun (cf. Matthew 17:2). Little by little, He changes us so that we are more and more conformed to His truth and His love. That way, when all comes to an end, we can join Him atop the true Mount Tabor as, God-willing, we ascend the final mountain in this journey of life and arrive safely in heaven.

This also means that our reception of Communion should lead to a conscious desire in our lives to seek the Truth and to be shaped by the Lord’s love. This should be a regular aspect of our lives as we seek to grow closer to the Lord. It should inform our life at home, at work, or in school. It should guide our interactions with family, with friends, and even with strangers. For in all those ways and in all that we do, we should cooperate with what the Lord is trying to do in our lives rather than get in His way.

With this in mind, I want to mention one more practical thing about the reception of Holy Communion in our two churches. It seems to me that the Parish made certain

adaptations during COVID to facilitate those who wanted to receive Communion either on the tongue and or on the hand. I think that this strategy works in many ways, but as our numbers increase we need to smooth things out a little. With that in mind, I think the following will help.

At St. Catherine of Siena:

For those who would like to receive on the hand, please continue to come up at the front of the line. For those who would like to receive on the tongue, please continue to come up at the end of the line. For all receiving Communion or a blessing, please make sure to fill out the whole Communion rail as that is the most efficient way to distribute Communion and offer blessings.

At St. Vincent Ferrer:

We will continue distributing Communion at the rails for those who would like to receive on the tongue and in the center aisles for those who would like to receive on the hand. If we have four ministers of Holy Communion, we will use both rails as well as have two ministers in the center aisle. When it comes to moving to your preferred Communion line, I ask that you be charitable and let others pass by to their preferred lines as well. If you are sitting on the left side of the church and want to receive on the tongue at the rail by the Friars’ Chapel, please go down the left aisle and walk around the back rather than cutting through the center aisle and the pews. Similarly, if you are sitting on the far right side of the church and want to receive on the hand, please go down the right aisle and walk around the back to get into the center aisle. There is no rush to receive Communion, and we will continue to distribute Communion until the lines are finished.

Hopefully this will help us to be peaceable and charitable as we go up to and come back from receiving the Sacrament of Charity so that we truly can be transfigured by the Lord.

In Christ,

Fr. Peter Martyr Jungwirth, O.P.