

Receiving Communion

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As a small faith-sharing group reflected on Sunday liturgy, a question arose. How could they enrich receiving the Eucharist? Sometimes Holy Communion is moving or comforting. Other times it seems ordinary. While the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, even the most faithful Catholics experience periods when Communion does little to rouse the soul. Getting more out of Communion entails inner spiritual work and engaging the Catholic imagination.

The document *Happy Are Those Who Are Called to His Supper*, prepared by the USCCB in November 2006, concerns reception of Holy Communion. The document stresses a double eucharistic unity: communion with the Risen Christ and with all believers. At Mass, we join our lives to Christ and participate in his saving sacrifice. As we receive his body and blood, we encounter the very presence of the Risen One. At the same time, Communion forges unity with one another. The bishops write, “While we each personally receive Holy Communion, it is not a private devotion. Rather, the reception of Holy Communion is an integral part of our worship as a community of faith.” Because we share communion with Christ we come into union with one another.

Growing in an awareness of these mysteries of unity with Christ and one another takes preparation. Consider preparing throughout the week. This can be assisted through daily prayer, self-reflection, examinations of conscience, and healthy sacramental practices.

Preparation during the liturgy itself is important. Actively listen to the Word of God and to the eucharistic prayer. Savoring the imagery in the *Agnus Dei* prepares us for receiving Communion.

Eucharistic hymnody is intended for all to sing. It is not background music. The text make connections between receiving Eucharist and what it is doing for us.

All of this leads up to the actual reception. As one body we process to the altar. We reverence the sacrament with a humble bow of the head. Our personal prayers of love and thanksgiving follow when all have received and sit in silence.

Pope Benedict XVI has explained, “Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 14). Preparing to be united with Christ and one another will help us in our identity as the body of Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What does it mean to be in communion with the Risen Christ?
- For what do I hunger? Do I believe the Eucharist will feed that need?

HOME ACTIVITIES

Pray before all meals with the sense that all on the table are God’s gifts.

Dining expresses intimacy. When sharing a meal with others, even those in your family, know that invisible bonds of love are connecting you. **R**

SCRIPTURE CORNER

Luke 22:14–30

John 21:1–14

1 Corinthians 11:23–33

What do these tell us about the Lord’s desire to share his life with us?

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