

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, B – July 1, 2018 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Fraternus Ranch, Day Three, Ocoee Camp, Copperhill, Tennessee – 1,275 words

It is natural, with gospels like today's, to focus in on the miracles that Jesus worked. But in the process, we could miss other important details – and there is one this Sunday that I would like to point out: that is, the posture adopted by those who sought or received the miracles. It says that they fell to their knees in front of Jesus! First there is Jairus, the synagogue official, who “fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, ‘My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live.’” Then there is the woman who was afflicted with hemorrhages, who touched the Lord's cloak and was instantly healed; when Christ asked who had touched him, it says that “She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth”. Jairus knelt in petition; the woman knelt in confession.

There are many other places in the gospels where people knelt before our Lord. Think about when Peter and the others had been fishing all night and caught nothing; our Lord came to them, told them to let down their nets again, and they brought in huge catch. Peter, humbled and astonished, fell to his knees in the boat and cried out, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”. Here we see kneeling as a humble recognition of unworthiness. And then consider the Book of Revelation, which depicts the worship of the angels and the saints in heaven: there, in many passages, we see them falling down before the Lamb in adoration. Kneeling before God – whether to ask for what we need, confess our sins, give him thanks, express our unworthiness, or adore and worship him – is a very natural posture for us mere men to take.

What about us? When do we kneel before the Lord? Obviously we do so during Mass, at the holiest moments, such as when the priest recites the Eucharistic Prayer and makes Christ's sacrifice present on our altar. We kneel again at the conclusion of the *Agnus Dei* or Lamb of God in preparation for Holy Communion. Of course, we genuflect also – going down on one knee, even if only briefly – when we enter or leave the church or pass before the tabernacle. We kneel during adoration of the Blessed Sacrament – at least for a little while, though we might often sit after a few minutes so that we may pray more easily. I know that I like to kneel when I go to confession, recognizing that the priest acts *in persona Christi* to forgive my sins. And I am sure many of you kneel to pray in other circumstances as well.

But what about at Holy Communion? I have to say that I have been impressed with how many of you have been kneeling to receive at the Masses we have celebrated thus far here at Ranch. It's a natural posture to take at that most sacred moment, when the priest holds up the host and says, “The Body of Christ”, and we respond “Amen”. In the Latin Mass the priest at that moment says “*Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam. Amen.*” – “May our Lord Jesus Christ guard your soul unto everlasting life. Amen.” Whatever form of the Mass we attend, at the moment of communion we recognize that it is the one who can answer our prayers, forgive our sins, make us worthy to be with him, and whom we truly do worship, who is present before us; and, indeed, who enters into our bodies and souls.

Kneeling for Holy Communion is a very noble thing to do, and I want to encourage this practice. It is in no way prohibited by Church law. I am sure that some of your churches have an altar rail that you can kneel at; sadly, in many of our churches, that rail was removed. Kneeling without a rail or kneeler is certainly more difficult, but those who are able to make that sacrifice do a beautiful thing. Indeed, as part of our Knighthood program now we encourage kneeling as a way of making reparation for offenses against the Blessed Sacrament. Gentlemen: Jesus Christ is really and truly present in his full reality in every particle of the Host and in every drop of the Precious Blood! Yet see how many approach him casually and even carelessly! Let it not be so for us Fraternus brothers. Let's set a good example for others.

When we kneel to receive Holy Communion we most easily and properly receive on the tongue, which is also the traditional way to receive. Thus, the priest – again, who acts *in persona Christi* – feeds us. Receiving in the hand is permitted by way of indult in Church law, but its body language is very different: one takes and feeds oneself! In fact, many people now speak of “taking communion” instead of “receiving” it; this is an error, for who are we to take anything from God? Receiving in the hand also places a greater responsibility on us, for particles of the host can and sometimes do remain on our hands and fingers. Therefore, anyone who does receive this way must carefully check his hands and consume any remaining particles before lowering them. God forbid that any particle should fall to the floor and be trampled upon!

My brothers, there is much confusion in our Church today. Many Catholics do not go to church every Sunday and Holy Day. Some of us, who grew up in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, were catechized poorly or even taught error. I could list several other negative things, but suffice to say that, in many respects, we have been robbed of our patrimony. But groups like Fraternus are part of the fix – part of the great movement of recovery and restoration that God is raising up for his Church. If you take the practice of kneeling for Holy Communion back to your family and parish, you will probably catch some flack. Maybe the priest will look at you funny; maybe, sadly, he will tell you to stand. No matter. Talk to him afterwards, privately, and see if you can bring him along. Perhaps others will look at you funny or say things. Don’t worry about them.

No, do not worry – for although some may reject what you do, many others will be inspired by it. We men are made to give good example and lead others toward what is right. We believe that Jesus Christ is our King of kings and Lord of lords and that he really and truly is present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. When we receive Holy Communion in the state of grace we are united with him and he gradually transforms us into who he created us to be. Falling to our knees now – again, for those who are able – is good practice for how we will worship in heaven. Gentlemen, if God were to appear to us in his glory we would not just kneel, we would crawl – if we even dared approach him. But he hides his glory; he comes to us veiled in a sacrament, so that we may approach him with confidence.

As a priest – a minister of the altar – I beg you, and I challenge all who are able: when you come forward to receive, do so kneeling, and receive our Lord on the tongue. He will bless your sacrifice, make it fruitful, strengthen your faith, and inspire greater faith in others. Praised be Jesus Christ – now and for ever! Amen.