

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, A – June 14, 2020 – Fr. Bryan Jerabek  
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham – 5pm Vigil; 7:15, 8:30, & 11am Sunday Masses – 835 words

In the Most Holy Eucharist, our Lord Jesus Christ offers himself to the Father in sacrifice, as the price of our salvation. But he offers himself to us also, so that we may receive and grow in that gift. He gives us his Body and Blood – not as one who is dead, but one who is alive forevermore. Thus, when we receive him in Holy Communion we have a real encounter with a living person in his total reality. We do not receive merely his Flesh and Blood, but the whole of who he is. Jesus gives himself entirely to us in every Holy Communion.

Well, what do we do at that moment and immediately following? We all have to struggle with distractions at times, for sure. But I think most of us have a routine. We receive communion, we go back to our pews, we kneel or sit, we pray. But how do we pray – and about what? This is what I would like to consider. For we are meant to make an offering of ourselves in that moment also. We are not only taking and receiving, but giving – or at least we should be. To address this question, I would like to look at the examples that Christ and his Mother left us.

The sacred scriptures tell us that our Lord appeared to his disciples many times over the course of forty days after his Resurrection.<sup>1</sup> And we see that whenever he did so, two things typically happened: he showed them his wounds, and he offered them his peace.<sup>2</sup> Since our encounter in Holy Communion is also with the risen Lord, he offers us those things, likewise. He shows us those wounds that remain even after winning the victory, and he says, “Peace be with you”. Everything he said and did was for our instruction. So what can we learn from this?

What I would like to propose is that we imitate what he did. As he gives himself to us, showing us his wounds and offering peace, we can show him our own wounds and ask for peace and healing. After all, there is a direct correlation between our wounds and his – for ours were caused by our own sins or the sin of others, and his were the price of the sins of all. Even though scars always remain, he wants to heal us. And with that healing comes a deeper peace that we can only have from him. As we pray after communion, we should approach him in this way.

Now a warning is needed: we should be careful how we expose our wounds, for there can be a temptation to think in unhealthy ways about them. Rehearsing the memories can often lead to sadness, discouragement, a renewal or deepening of pain, and even self-hatred. We must exercise caution and seek a holy simplicity, presenting ourselves to him as we are now. No amount of “replaying the tape” will change the past. But our Lord can redeem the past, and that is what heals. So let us show ourselves to him simply and humbly – and ask him for peace.

We can also learn how to offer ourselves to Christ in Holy Communion from Our Lady, who gave herself fully to him while he was on earth as his first and most faithful disciple; but then also received Holy Communion from the Apostle John after Jesus had ascended into heaven. In the “Hail, Holy Queen” we refer to her as our “most gracious advocate” – in other words, our great helper and intercessor. She will assist us not only to be “worthy of the promises of Christ” at the end of our lives, but to have a fruitful encounter with him even now.

In this regard, the great apostle of Marian consecration, St. Louis de Montfort, recommends that we first ask Mary to lend us her heart so that we can receive her Son with her same dispositions. Then he urges meditation on the prayer we say right before communion: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof...”. We can then invite her to usher us into his presence, for she is always worthy to approach him and happily brings others to him as well. Then he will “say but the word”, and our souls may indeed find healing.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Acts 1:3.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, John 20:19-20.

<sup>3</sup> For St. Louis de Montfort’s teaching on this, see *True Devotion to Mary*, nos. 266-273.

We may well already have a routine in how we approach communion, but I invite you to reflect and see if it what I have just said helps you go deeper in your union with Christ. As we approach him in the communion line we can do so with Our Lady, asking her to help us come worthily into his presence. Then, having received him, we can show him our wounds and pray for healing peace. Afterwards, we may certainly pray about all our other needs and wants. Christ is alive; he offers himself to us whole and entire. Let us endeavor to give ourselves more fully to him!