

June 15, 2016

Dear Parishioners:

Recently we celebrated the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, which focuses on the Eucharist. I would like to make a few remarks about our customs and practices regarding this sacrament, sometimes called the Blessed Sacrament. Eucharist refers to the rite that we call the Mass, the food which we receive, and the Blessed Sacrament which we adore. There are certain gestures that are appropriate for our devotional and liturgical practice.

When Jesus instituted this sacrament at the Last Supper, he said, “Do this in memory of me.” Each time we do it we are reliving the mystery of our salvation: the death and resurrection of Jesus. From the year 30 AD to the present day, Sunday Eucharist has been the central practice of the Church, for that was the day that Jesus rose from the dead. In his Letter to the Corinthians Paul tells us that it was celebrated in someone’s home. The participants stood throughout the rite in solidarity with Jesus, who rose from the dead. Liturgical practices evolved as the church grew, and larger venues were needed to accommodate those who came to the Eucharist.

In our time in the celebration of the Eucharist, there are three gestures: sitting, kneeling, and standing. We sit for the first two Scripture readings, the homily, the preparation of the gifts, the meditation after communion, and the announcements. We kneel for the Eucharistic Prayer from the Holy, Holy until the Great Amen. We stand for all other parts.

We remain standing throughout the Communion procession. If you choose the ancient practice of receiving Communion in the hand, place one hand under the other and form a throne to receive your King. As the minister says the body of Christ, bow slightly and say “Amen” as an affirmation of your belief. Do the same when you receive the blood of Christ. Once the celebrant sees that everyone has received Communion and the procession is over, he sits and all sit with him. This provides personal time for quiet reflection on the gift we have just received.

When you enter our church, bow toward the altar as a sign of reverence for the place from which the Eucharist is celebrated. Genuflection is reserved for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In our church the Blessed Sacrament is located in the chapel on the west side. The vigil lamp hangs outside the chapel to direct us to the Blessed Sacrament. The sanctuary lamp is in the chapel itself next to the tabernacle. Whether the Blessed Sacrament is exposed or remains in the tabernacle, genuflect on one knee when you enter and leave the chapel.

May the Body and Blood of our Lord continue to nurture your faith.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. David A. Sork
Pastor