



SAINT JOHN FISHER PARISH

June 15, 2017

Dear Parishioners:

The recent celebration of the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ has moved me to devote this month's letter to three aspects of the Eucharist: the meaning of bread and wine, the reception of Communion under both species, and the reception of Communion in the hand.

Unlike water, used for baptism, bread and wine need to undergo a process of dying and rising before they can be used. Jesus said in John's Gospel, "Unless the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit." The grain is crushed, mixed with water, and baked to become bread. The grapes are crushed and fermented to become wine. It is when Christ died and rose that salvation occurred. This is called the paschal mystery. The Eucharist is that sacrificial meal in which the death and resurrection of Jesus is celebrated.

A practice that was restored to the Church only this past generation was the reception of Communion under both species for all the faithful. This had been the practice from the very beginning of the Church, but for a variety of historical reasons fell out of use and was restricted to the priest. The reforms of Vatican II restored this practice to all the faithful. Jesus invitation to us is: "take and eat, this is my body; take and drink this is the cup of my blood." Full participation in the Eucharist means not only partaking of the meal each time we come to Mass but also both eating and drinking. Unless you are an alcoholic or are allergic to wheat, I strongly recommend that you receive Communion under both species each time you come to the table of the Lord.

Until 1978 people could only receive the consecrated bread on the tongue. Allowing one to receive it on the hand was not an innovation but the restoration of the original practice. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote in the fourth century:

So when you come forward, do not come with arm extended or fingers parted. Make your left hand a throne for your right, since your right hand is about to welcome a king. Cup your palm and receive in it Christ's body, saying in response Amen.

The proper way to receive Communion in the hand is to place one hand under the other and create a throne upon which the host will be placed, the throne of Christ the King. Bow your head slightly as you are presented the host. With the hand underneath, take the host and place it in your mouth. Because it is an ancient practice, for hygienic reasons and to avoid the dropping of the host, I recommend receiving Communion in the hand.

May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring you to everlasting life.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. David A. Sork
Pastor