



## THE PASTOR'S DESK

### January 10, 2010 - Fasting before Receiving Holy Communion

#### Dear Parishioners,

In case you haven't heard, St. John's will welcome a new parochial vicar on January 27<sup>th</sup>. He is **Fr. William Brailsford**. Ordained in 2004, Fr. Brailsford spent a summer here as a seminarian in 2002. He has been parochial vicar at St. Ann's in Tenley Circle since ordination. The spaghetti dinner on January 30<sup>th</sup> will be the perfect time to welcome him to the parish. We will also have a coffee and donut reception for him after all the Masses on Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>. Please pray for him as he makes this transition. I know you will welcome him with the love and friendship typical of our parish.

A few weeks ago, someone asked me about the rules for fasting before Mass. She could not find them in the Catechism. I told her I thought it was in the Code of Canon Law. I found it and other regulations regarding the Eucharist that may be of interest. Canon 919 concerns the fast before receiving Holy Communion. As we begin a new year, perhaps it is good to be reminded of this and to make a resolution to keep the fast. Here is the Canon:

1. One who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain from any food or drink, with the exception only of water and medicine, for at least the period of one hour before Holy Communion.

2. A priest who celebrates the Most Holy Eucharist two or three times on the same day may take something before the second or third celebration even if the period of one hour does not intervene.

3. Those who are advanced in age or who suffer from any infirmity, as well as those who take care of them, can receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have taken something during the previous hour.

Paragraph one would include under the word "food" and "drink" also chewing gum, mints, candy, soda, juices, etc. Anything you put in your mouth other than water and medicine is included. Why does the Church ask this? The reception of Holy Communion is the central act of our lives. The effects it has after receiving and our anticipation in receiving go beyond the hour or so we spend in Church.

Fasting is a concrete way to acknowledge this reality and to begin to focus ourselves on receiving the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. In this

New Year, rededicate yourself to keeping the fast before coming to Mass in the spirit of anticipating and preparing for the reception of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Paragraph two explains why you may see Father having coffee and donuts in between the Masses. As long as we fast before our first Mass, priests can have something to eat and drink before their next Mass. Paragraph three gives the exception to fasting for those who are elderly or infirm. The language is kind of vague. What is "advanced age" or "any infirmity"? At fifty-one, I feel advanced in age. But, I don't think I qualify. This language is vague because it has to apply all over the world. There are places where one person is considered advanced in age where in another place someone of the same age may not be considered aged. It is a judgment call for each of us. If you are aged or infirm and fasting would unduly threaten your health, then you are exempt.

Another area of confusion has to do with receiving Holy Communion more than once a day. Canon 917 deals with this. It says:

*A person who has received the Most Holy Eucharist may receive it again on the same day only during the celebration of the Eucharist in which the person participates.*

This allows you to receive Holy Communion twice in one day, provided you participate fully in each Mass. This means, for example, that you can go to the regular, daily Mass of the parish and to a funeral on the same day and receive Communion at both Masses. Another situation would be where you go to a wedding on a Saturday afternoon, receive Communion, and then go to the Sunday Vigil Mass Saturday evening. There are plenty of other situations where this can arise. The key is to remember that you must participate in any Mass in which you receive Communion. No church hopping at Communion time allowed!

If you have any questions about Church law or custom, do not hesitate to ask me. I may not be able to answer right away, but I promise to find an answer for you.

God Bless you and your families in the New Year,  
**Fr. LaHood**