



THE PASTOR'S DESK

March 21, 2010 - Invisible Bonds of Communion

Dear Parishioners,

Continuing with Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, we look at what the Holy Father said about the invisible and visible dimensions of the Eucharist. The invisible element is the invisible sharing of the members of the Church in the life of grace. We presume that everyone receiving Communion in the Church has been baptized, is in a state of grace, and believes all that is proposed by the Church as part of the Faith of the Church. The invisible bonds of grace and charity are presupposed. The Holy Father speaks about how we maintain these bonds:

Keeping these invisible bonds intact is a specific moral duty incumbent upon Christians who wish to participate fully in the Eucharist by receiving the body and blood of Christ. The Apostle Paul appeals to this duty when he warns: "Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Cor 11:28). Saint John Chrysostom, with his stirring eloquence, exhorted the faithful: "I too raise my voice, I beseech, beg and implore that no one draw near to this sacred table with a sullied and corrupt conscience. Such an act, in fact, can never be called 'communion', not even were we to touch the Lord's body a thousand times over, but 'condemnation', 'torment' and 'increase of punishment'".

Along these same lines, the Catechism of the Catholic Church rightly stipulates that "anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion". I therefore desire to reaffirm that in the Church there remains in force, now and in the future, the rule by which the Council of Trent gave concrete expression to the Apostle Paul's stern warning when it affirmed that, in order to receive the Eucharist in a worthy manner, "one must first confess one's sins, when one is aware of mortal sin".

This is very important to remember, especially at this time of the year. We are all aware of our "Easter Duty," to receive Holy Communion at least once a year during the Easter Season and to go to confession if we are conscious of grave sin. That way, the visible Church on earth will be as closely aligned as possible with the Church in Heaven. If everyone at Mass is in a state of grace and receives Holy Communion, the assembly is a real image of the Saints in Heaven, where, perfected by grace in Heaven they are in never-ending Communion with God the Father in Jesus Christ.

The Communion of the visible Church on earth is a manifestation of the Church in Heaven. Because of this, the bonds that bring us together in the visible Church on earth must be given and manifested visibly, through the structure of the Church and the sacraments:

Ecclesial communion, as I have said, is likewise visible, and finds expression in the series of "bonds"

listed by the Council when it teaches: "They are fully incorporated into the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept her whole structure and all the means of salvation established within her, and within her visible framework are united to Christ, who governs her through the Supreme Pontiff and the Bishops, by the bonds of profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government and communion".

The Eucharist, as the supreme sacramental manifestation of communion in the Church, demands to be celebrated in a context where the outward bonds of communion are also intact. In a special way, since the Eucharist is "as it were the summit of the spiritual life and the goal of all the sacraments", it requires that the bonds of communion in the sacraments, particularly in Baptism and in priestly Orders, be real. It is not possible to give communion to a person who is not baptized or to one who rejects the full truth of the faith regarding the Eucharistic mystery. Christ is the truth and he bears witness to the truth (cf. Jn 14:6; 18:37); the sacrament of his body and blood does not permit duplicity.

We can tend to make the Church completely "spiritual" in the sense that it is completely invisible. However, because the Son of God became man, now the visible world of creation is the matrix or conduit by which God shares His Divine Life. Rather than being something to escape or transcend, the visible world is where we encounter God during our lives and where we live out our love of God and of neighbor. In assuming human nature, the Son of God affirmed the goodness of the visible world and took it up as the way of sharing His life with us. Indeed, the Resurrection of Christ is the final affirmation of the goodness of creation. Jesus rose in His human, albeit glorified, body. It is now through that same human body conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin and now glorified in Heaven that He pours out His Divine Life to us who are incorporated visibly into His Body, the Church.

As we approach Holy Week and the Sacred Triduum, take advantage of the many opportunities to go to Confession, especially if you have been away from the sacrament for awhile. Then, our parish celebration of Easter will be a true image of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb in Heaven.

**God bless,
Fr. LaHood**

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Please mark your calendars for the parish **Penance Service this Friday, March 26th at 7:00 pm.** Several priests will be present to hear confessions.