

FIRST COMMUNION 2010

Homily given by Fr. Dennis Koliński, SJC

St. Peter's Church in Volo

9 May 2010

Today is an exciting day for 22 of our young parishioners, who will be receiving their First Communion. They have been preparing for this day for two years, learning the basics of the faith and memorizing their prayers, just so that they would be ready for this moment, when for the first time in their lives, they will receive the Most Precious Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ under the form of bread.

But perhaps, some Catholics think that this is just one of those “kid things” that you outgrow as you get older. Why do I say this? Because 70% of American Catholics don't believe in the Real Presence. That means, that it would be safe to assume that some of you out there don't believe that our young First Communicants are really going to receive Jesus Christ Himself.

It is truly a strange world that we live in. People will believe in horoscopes, tarot cards and palm reading. They'll believe that crystals possess some kind of cosmic power. They'll believe in global warming. They'll believe everything the media tells them. But 70% of American Catholics won't believe what the Church has taught unchanged for the entire 2,000 years of its existence. Some believe that it's just blessed bread, or just a symbol, or just a memorial meal where we actually celebrate ourselves. They think that they're Catholics but they're really just Protestants.

The irony in this is that although many Protestants believe in a literal interpretation of Scripture, they, just like so many of our fellow Catholics, refuse to accept Christ's words about the Eucharist at face value, saying rather, that He was merely speaking symbolically or metaphorically. But let's listen to what He actually said.

After Jesus had multiplied the loaves and fish, He told the large crowd that had come to see Him in Capernaum: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world ... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you ... For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.”¹ That sounds pretty clear to me. And some of His disciples thought the same thing because they remarked: “How can this man give us (his) flesh to eat? ... This saying is hard; who can accept it?”² And then many of them left Jesus. But we don't hear Him running after them trying to win them back by saying: “I didn't really mean it that way. You just misinterpreted what I said. I didn't expect you to take it literally. It was only a figure of speech.” No. He merely turned to the Twelve and asked: “Do you also want to leave?”³

At the Last Supper, “Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.’”⁴ He didn't say, this is a symbol of my body. This symbolizes the blood that I will shed. No, once again. He clearly said, “This is my body.” Eat it. And, “This is my blood.” Drink it. Jesus never minced words. He always said what He meant. And He never tried to soften something so

that it was more palatable to others. Jesus was clearly saying that the bread and wine that He offered up that night was truly His Body and Blood.

In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul qualified this even further by stating, “whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord.”⁵ But if it was all only a symbol, just a memorial meal by which to remember Jesus, then this admonition doesn’t make any sense at all. It makes only if what the Church has been saying for the last 2,000 years is actually true. The bread and wine become the actual Body and Blood of Christ. This is what we receive in Holy Communion. And this is what our young people will be receiving for the first time today.

But it’s also important to take note of what St. Paul writes a few verses later: “For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.” What then of those Catholics, who receive Communion but do not recognize it for what it is—the Body and Blood of Jesus? This is one of the most profound and most important truths of our faith, but yet so very misunderstood and ignored today.

But because our First Communion is taking place during the month of May, the month of Mary, I am compelled to point out another important and related truth, namely, that when you receive the Most Precious Body of Our Lord, Mary His Mother will be standing right next to you. Have you stopped to think about that? And why is that so? Because wherever Her Son is, She also is. From the moment of His conception in Her womb, they have been inseparable.

God had no need of Mary, but He chose to come into the world and accomplish His work of salvation through Her. God the Son came down from heaven and imprisoned Himself within the womb of Mary. She thus became the world’s first tabernacle, just as Jesus allows Himself to be locked within the tabernacle of our church, waiting patiently for the priest to open it, so that he can bring Him to you. When Mary went to visit Elizabeth, carrying Jesus in Her womb as a Host in a monstrance, She made the first Corpus Christi procession. It was through Mary’s request that Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana, prefiguring that time when He would change wine into His Most Precious Blood. She followed Him along His Way of the Cross, experiencing every blow, every torment as Her own, as only a mother could. She followed Him up Calvary and stood at the foot of the Cross and watched the man She had carried in Her womb die. And when he breathed His last breath, a sword pierced Her heart just as Simeon had predicted that day many years before when She and Joseph brought their newborn child to the Temple. Mary was always at Her Son’s side—and still is. Where Jesus is, Mary is.

Mary’s *fiat*, “Let it be done to me,” that She pronounced in answer to the Angel Gabriel, was not only Mary’s acceptance of God’s will for Her but also Her profession of faith in the Real Presence of the Body of Christ in her womb; that although She wouldn’t be able to see it, God was to take up a body and dwell inside Her. Therefore, each time you say “Amen” before receiving Holy Communion, you echo Her *fiat*; you make a profession of faith that the Most Holy Eucharist is truly the Most Precious Body of Our Lord, who will take up His dwelling inside you.⁶

What better gift could you give your mother on this Mother’s Day than to receive your Lord and Savior for the first time, to be united with Him, who made you. He comes to you and you become little tabernacles where Jesus rests in you as He rested in the

womb of His Blessed Mother. And as you will kneel at the Communion Rail, She who is always at His side, will be standing next to you. She will watch as Her Son comes to dwell inside you. As St. Louis de Montfort once wrote: “She reserves a choice portion, indeed the choicest portion, to nourish and sustain her children and servants. They grow strong on the Bread of Life; they are made joyful with the wine that brings forth virgins. They are carried at her breast.”⁷

It is interesting to note that whoever denies the Real Presence in the Eucharist usually also denies the special the special role of the Blessed Virgin. In the same manner, whoever chooses to ignore Her usually also ignores the true significance of the Most Holy Eucharist. Today, when you approach the Communion Rail and receive the Most Precious Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, you will be proclaiming two very important truths. You will be witnesses to everyone in this church, indeed to the whole world, that Jesus is truly present in the Most Holy Eucharist and that as He comes to rest in you, His Most Blessed Mother will be there at your side.

¹ John 6:51, 53.

² John 6:52, 60.

³ John 6:67.

⁴ Matthew 26:26-28.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:27.

⁶ John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 55.

⁷ de Montfort, St. Louis Marie Grignon, *True Devotion to Mary* 208.