

Pastor's Message

Perhaps the most central principle of our Roman Catholic faith is the belief that our crucified and risen Lord remains present with us in the Body and Blood of the Eucharist. We believe that these elements that appear still to be bread and wine are *really* the body and blood of Christ. It is a profound act of faith that when you come to communion and the Eucharistic minister or the priest present the host to you and say "The Body of Christ" that we say "Amen" (I believe).

St Augustine says it this way:

"If you are the body of Christ and its members, it is the sacrament of what you are which is placed on the Lord's table: it is the sacrament of what you are which you receive. It is to what you are that you respond 'Amen'. This response is your signature. You hear: 'Body of Christ.' You respond: 'Amen!' Be a member of the Body of Christ so that your Amen may be true."

The ancient form of receiving the bread of life, the Body of Christ was on the hand. St. Cyril of Jerusalem in the 4th century writes:

"When you come forward, do not draw near with your hands wide open or with your fingers spread apart; instead, with your left hand make a throne for your right hand which will receive the King. Receive the Body of Christ in the hollow of your hand and give the response: 'Amen!'"

Communion on the tongue did not become vogue until almost 1,000 years later when the heaviness of the dark ages and the sense of our unworthiness of this great gift dominated our theology. The revision of the Mass at the Council brought us back to the more ancient tradition both in the way we celebrate Mass and in the way we receive communion.

St. Cyril goes on to say:

"Draw near also to the cup of his Blood. Do not stretch out your hands but bow in adoration and respect, and say: 'Amen'...Then, while waiting for the final prayer, give thanks to God who judges you worthy of such great mysteries."

The reintroduction of receiving from the chalice in the Council revision of the Mass brought us back to the experience of the early church and of the apostles at the Last Supper. As Jesus told us to "Take and eat...take and drink", so we do. We receive his Body so that we recognize who we are and to what we are called, i.e., to be Christ's presence in our world. We drink of his Blood to remind us of the high cost Christ paid for our salvation and to realize the high cost we must pay to be a true disciple of Christ. After communion we are invited to spend time in silent prayer, grateful to God for this great gift of His Son for us.

The communion song sung while we approach the Table of the Lord is to remind us that we are all one in voice, in mind and in heart. All that we have celebrated, the reason we have come together in prayer and song culminates in this reception of the Body and Blood of Christ. To this greatest of mysteries we reply: Amen (I believe) and we sit (or kneel) in reverence and in awe.

Fr. Chris