

Sunday Eucharist. “On Sunday, we have a common assembly of all our members, whether they live in the city or in the outlying districts. The recollections of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as there is time. When the reader has finished, the president of the assembly speaks to us; he urges everyone to imitate the examples of virtue we have heard in the readings. Then we all stand up together and pray. On the conclusion of our prayer, bread and wine and water are brought forward. The president offers prayers and gives thanks to the best of his ability, and the people give their assent by saying ‘Amen.’ The Eucharist is distributed, everyone present communicates, and the deacons take it to those who are absent. The wealthy, if they wish, may make a contribution, and they themselves decide the amount. The collection is placed in the custody of the president, who uses it to help the orphans and widows and all who for any reason are in distress, whether because they are sick, in prison, or away from home. In a word, he takes care of all who are in need.”

This is perhaps the oldest description of what Mass looked like in the early church. It is written by St. Justin the martyr who lived in the second century (100-165). It is remarkable to think that our worship has changed little from this time. It is still important that the community assemble. It is important that we share the Word, break the bread and distribute the Eucharist to the people. When we do so, whether in a simple or fancy way, we are connected with believers who have done the same for two thousand years. We are also connected to Christ who gave us this memorial at the Last Supper. Justin further says that “we do not consume the Eucharistic bread and wine as if it were ordinary food and drink, for we have been taught that as Jesus Christ our Savior became a man of flesh and blood by the power of the Word of God, so also the food that our flesh and blood assimilates for its nourishment becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus by the power of his own words contained in the prayer of thanksgiving.” Again, “no one may share the Eucharist with us unless he believes that what we teach is true, unless he is washed in the regenerating waters of baptism for the remission of his sins, and unless he lives in accordance with the principles given us by Christ.”

By your participation in Mass you are doing what the Apostles and Fathers of the church did. You are doing what the martyrs did. You are doing what saints for hundreds of years did. You are doing what Christ has asked us to do. It is our most direct connection with Christ. My hope and prayer is that all of us may realize the importance of what we do at Mass. Teach it to your children. Invite your family, friends and neighbors to be part of it; for such has been our worship for nearly 2,000 years.

Father Jeff
04/25/2021