

When Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, the infant in Elizabeth's womb, John the Baptist, leaps for joy. Speaking of Mary and Jesus, Elizabeth exclaims "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (1:42). Mary is indeed blessed for she has been attentive to God's word (Note to Lk 11:27-28).

And blessed is the fruit of Mary's womb, which is the Word of God. Fruit brings us back in memory to the Garden of Eden. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of creation, God spoke: "And so it happened: the earth brought forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw that it was good" (Gn 1:11c-12). According to the Priestly tradition, the human race was originally intended to live on plants and fruits as were the animals (Note to 1:29).

Adam and Eve were able to eat from every tree in the Garden of Eden except the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "It is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, or else you will die'" (Gn 3:3). Sadly, sin entered the world as Adam and Eve listened to the devil and ate the forbidden fruit. But all was not lost, God told them: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; They will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel" (3:15). In Saint Jerome's Vulgate bible, "She" refers to Mary, the mother of the messiah. In Christian art, Mary is often depicted with her foot on the head of the serpent (Note to 3:15). With reference to the Messiah, "indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8).

Jesus is the fruit of Mary's womb who by the grace of God we are permitted to receive for the sake of eternal life. At Mass in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the priest takes bread in his hand and prays: "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life" (Roman Missal, 529). Yes, with the proper prayers and by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the earth is transformed into the Eucharist, the Bread of Life.

Then the priest takes the chalice filled with wine and prays again, "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink" (Roman Missal, 529). Yes, with the proper prayers and by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the vine is transformed into the Blood of Christ.

The fruit of the Mass is intended for God's holy people. Just as we hear and respond to his Word in Sacred Scripture, we are invited to "grow constantly in holiness by conscious, active, and fruitful participation in the mystery of the Eucharist" (p18, #5). With the proper reception of Holy Communion, we receive Jesus, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity.

Having received this great gift, we are meant to bear the fruit of Holy Communion to the world:

- "The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus (CCC 1391). Jesus himself taught: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (Jn 6:56).
- As ordinary food nourishes our body, Holy Communion nourishes our spiritual life. "Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ ... preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism" (CCC 1392).

- Another fruit is the forgiveness of venial sins. “For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins” (CCC 1393).
- As food gives us strength, so to the fruit of the Eucharist strengthens our charity and love for one another. “Having received the gift of love, let us die to sin and live for God” (CCC 1394).
- “The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest” (CCC 1397).
- Finally, Jesus said: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; . . . he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and . . . abides in me, and I in him” (Jn 6:51, 54, 56).