



Homily for 6/23/2019

Corpus Christi / First Holy Communion

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*The Way We Treat Things*

Pay attention to the way we treat things. When the thing is not important, we tend to pay it little attention. We are haphazard and nonchalant in our handling of it. However, for important and nice things like expensive jewelry, fine china, or anything else we value, there is a clear difference in the way we treat these things. We are more careful, gentle, intentional in our movements, even reverent.

So, the question is: *how important is the Eucharistic to us?* Is it just one more thing among many, or is it the most precious thing? Do we treat it with routine indifference, or do we treat it even better than the other things we hold dear? Notice how Mother Church teaches her children to act around and interact with the Blessed Sacrament. We are taught how to genuflect, that is, bend the knee, in the presence of our Eucharistic Lord. We are taught to receive the Eucharist with reverence. Though in recent years the practice of reception of the Blessed Sacrament in the hand was introduced, Mother Church has always recommended the immemorial tradition of receiving the Eucharist directly on the tongue (*Memoriale Domini, Dominicae Cenaes*.) Mother Church teaches that reception on the tongue is the preferred means because it shows more humility, devotion, respect and reverence, and it is the more child-like disposition of being fed by God. How many things do we touch with our hands? How much more careful are we about what touches our tongue? Also notice how in the more ancient form of the Roman Rite, once his fingers have touched the consecrated Hosts, the priest keeps them together until those fingers have been purified after Holy Communion. This is a sign that what he touches is not just ordinary, but is consecrated and set aside. The manner in which he holds his fingers signifies this - by touching nothing else. I - and many other priests who have come to appreciate this noble tradition of the 'canonical digits' - practice it also in the New Order of Mass. You may notice that I keep my index finger and thumb held together after they have been used to hold the consecrated Host. By means of these bodily movements we show reverence and respect. They are not meant just for pageantry and show. They carry deep meaning.

There is also a difference in the way we speak with a loved one over a complete stranger. The stranger we may or may not greet. And even then, it's often just a meaningless greeting, "hello" and "goodbye." However, if the person is important to us - a newborn baby, a newlywed spouse, a dear friend - we place all our attention on that person, and we speak tender words and open our hearts to him. To the loved one we are more attentive, sensitive, and even reverent. So, the question is, "Do you recognize who is present in the Eucharist?" Is the Divine Presence of Jesus simply a stranger, an unknown entity that is perhaps greeted indifferently? Or is His presence that of a dear friend, one whom you want to get to know more deeply? Again, Mother Church has always recommended the pious practice of the thanksgiving after Holy Communion. This has always been seen as the time to speak intimately with the Divine Lover of our Souls. Too often this is overlooked and forgotten. We simply receive, walk back to our pews and quickly end Mass and go away. Don't be afraid to kneel and pray and beg the Lord to 'stay with us' *Mane nobiscum Domine!* Close your eyes and invite the Lord in. Speak with Him and let Him dwell with you.

On this Corpus Christi, let us rejoice that in the Eucharist we have the pearl of great price, the treasure buried in the field; let us conduct ourselves in its presence accordingly. On this great Solemnity, let us also recognize that hidden behind the appearance of bread and wine is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our dearly beloved Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not treat his presence indifferently, but rather open the door of our hearts to Him in loving adoration.