



From the Pastor's Desk

August 23, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Some time ago I commented in one of my Sunday Bulletin letters how I am open to giving Holy Communion at the Altar rail at the English Masses but that I was waiting to see how the community reacted and whether or not it would be appropriate to do so. We have been distributing the Eucharist at the altar rail for some time at the hispanic Masses and it seems to be orderly and very reverent. Since Holy Communion is extraordinary Food its reception should be as reverent as possible. I think that everyone will agree with that. Our Lord's Body and Blood is a Miraculous gift from God such that even to receive It one must be in a state of grace, in other words one must not have any serious sin on one's soul. Symbols speak louder than words. The symbolic gesture of receiving Holy Communion on ones knees is a way of saying that this Food is different, that this Food is truly holy. Without having to resort to words the gesture itself induces one to give greater respect for Holy Communion. Gestures at Mass always have the danger of losing meaning through repetition and so as in everything we do in the sacred liturgy we have to struggle against the mere routine and the temptation to forget how significant the actions and words of the Mass truly are.

At any rate, I have spoken to about twenty people since putting the letter in the bulletin and everyone has indicated that they would very much like to receive Holy Communion at the rail on their knees. Of course we have people in our community who would not be able to receive It in this manner because of health reasons. In that case they could simply stand at the rail and receive It while standing. Those who would like to receive Communion while kneeling would then be free to do so. I think that if one kneels, however he or she should receive on the tongue because of the danger of dropping the sacred Host while trying to receive It kneeling down. I would prefer giving Holy Communion on the tongue and if the person leaves the altar server with enough room to place the paten beneath the chin than there should be very little danger that the Sacred Host would drop on the floor. My concern as a priest is that Our Blessed Lord's gift of His Body and Blood be received by pure hearts and in the most respectful and appropriate way possible. I know that the Church gives one the option of receiving in the hand and also the option of kneeling but from my experience as a priest over these past twenty four years I also know that there has been a decrease in the respect and reverence shown to the Blessed Sacrament and loss of faith in the real presence. The way that people come dressed and the lack of silence before and after Mass in the Church are indicators to me of lack of real belief. I think at Sts. Peter and Paul our community dresses and acts well in regard to the Eucharist for the most part but I have been to other parishes where I am distressed by what I see. Shorts, indecent dresses, clothes that look more appropriate at the beach and the talking and visiting that goes on in the pews before and after the sacred Mass seem very disrespectful to me. I don't know what

the state of ones soul is and so I have to leave that up to the person and God but at least I can try to encourage frequent Confession so as to keep the soul in a state of sanctifying grace and respect for Our Lord's great Gift.

With all of that said, I would like to begin giving Holy Communion at the altar rail starting the second Sunday of September. Again one does not have to receive Our Lord while kneeling if one does not feel that he or she is able to do so. But, in an orderly fashion I would ask that everyone proceed to the altar rail and the priest will start on the side closest to the choir area and distribute Holy Communion along the length of the altar rail ending at the podium and then starting over again. The distribution of the Sacred Blood will occur as usual with no change since receiving from the cup is more difficult in the kneeling position. Many people opt to receive Our Lord under the form of Bread alone and in doing so they are receiving Him entirely just as if they received from the cup. In the host He is present in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity just as He is under the form of wine. While one is kneeling and waiting for the priest to come to give Holy Communion he or she should be adoring Jesus and praying to Him in preparation for the moment that He comes to him or her in this special Sacrament of His love. If Deacon Tommy is present he will help the priest in the distribution of the Host while two extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist assist with the Precious Blood. However, if Deacon Tommy is not present the priest alone will distribute the Hosts.

We will also give some instructions at Mass before the second Sunday of September so that everyone is aware of the changes. There might be a little disruption and unease at the beginning but it will not take long before we are comfortable with this new option for receiving Our Lord. The Bishop has given us permission to do so and so we are in conformity with him in this matter. As I stated in the earlier letter Our Holy Father has begun to distribute Holy Communion at St. Peter's in like manner. People have always had the option of kneeling to receive Communion but practically speaking that has been very difficult since they would have had to do so on the floor as the priest generally stands in the aisle to distribute Communion. As I said we have been giving Communion in the manner described for several months and it seems to be working well. I have also noticed a more reverent respect for this great Sacrament during Mass itself.

God bless you all and if anyone would like to talk to me personally about this matter please let me know. I commend you for your desire to deepen your love and respect for the Holy Eucharist and I hope that Our Lord is happy with all of us at Sts. Peter and Paul parish. I hope that He is consoled too through your adoration and reparation on the First Fridays. During the week when you come to pray to Him present in the Sacrament of His Love please remember all of us at Sts. Peter and Paul parish and especially the priests during this Year of the Priesthood.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,
Father Timothy Davison.