

The Reception of Holy Communion (Part 4) – An Individual? or Part of a Body?

There is an overemphasis on what we can call individualism in our modern world. For many people, (including myself at times and in certain ways,) life can become all about me and what I want. I am a unique individual, which is true, but in our modern world, our individual desires, emotions, wants, needs, hopes, and dreams often take precedence over what other people need from us and certainly also over what God desires us to do with our lives. We know that this is one area that we constantly need to check ourselves and make the prayer of Jesus our own prayer when He is praying in the agony in garden, “Not my will, but your will be done” (Luke 22:42). My argument and reflection for you today is simply to try to view the reception of Holy Communion at Mass as an antidote to this modern disorder of individualism.

We’ve already reflected on how Jesus gives us Himself totally at Mass when we receive Holy Communion. He wants to transform us with His grace and fill us with His Divine Life. We should receive peace and joy from Christ in Holy Communion, but we are also supposed to be sent out to try our best to serve and love God and others. I reflected earlier that Jesus is not meant to be a good-feeling spiritual vitamin, but a real, alive person who now abides in our body and soul. He calls us out of ourselves, and He wants to help us live our faith in the day to day activities and relationships that life throws at us. The pride of individualism, where we only think about ourselves and what we want, is contrary to the very nature of God’s love and Jesus heart for us and for the world. My challenge for you is to think about how in Holy Communion, you are actually transformed into the very Body of Christ and are becoming ONE with every other Catholic around the world. In other words, do you care about your body?

The analogy is very striking, but we certainly believe that it is true. If all Christians are a part of one Mystical Body of Christ, then we should have a special love and care for those people as we do for our very own bodies! For example, how often do we pray for everyone else at Mass to become a great Saint and get to know God as fully as possible? How often do we take the time to greet strangers or people we have never met after Mass, to make them feel welcome to our parish (or just to brighten their day)? Do we have any desire to serve them or teach them or become friends with them in order to enhance and grow the body of Christ in every way possible (Ephesians 4:15-16)? Do we suffer with those who are suffering or do we rejoice with those who authentically rejoice? Through Baptism, through all the other sacraments, and especially through the Eucharist at Mass, we are actually united to Jesus and become ONE BODY with all other Christians and especially Catholic Christians that exist. As St. Paul so beautifully writes, “if one member suffers, then all the parts suffer with it...if one member is honored, then all the parts are glad” (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Overall, my encouragement when you come to Mass on Sunday is to at least make this one of your prayers. Lord, how can I pray for or help/love someone else today here at our Church? This identity of being a part of the Body of Christ is quite literally the most important identity of our entire lives. We can crush our pride and our sinful individualism by asking Christ to help us think more about how we can help and serve others in the midst of Holy Communion. When we are truly united to Jesus in the Eucharist, we are truly united to all other Christians and especially Catholic Christians. We are truly one body, and when we put this into practice, we can rise above the sinful aspect of individualism in our modern age and live in union with Christ and with all other members of His body on our way to heaven.

