

RIGHT REVERENCE FOR OUR LORD TRULY AND REALLY PRESENT IN THE EUCHARISTIC

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Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him."

-John 6:53-56

From time to time in our homilies throughout the liturgical year, Deacon Brady and I focus our Church's teaching on the Real Presence of Our Resurrected Lord in the Eucharist, under each of the species, that of the bread and that of the wine. While this core dogma of our Faith may seem to be beyond our ability to comprehend, it is the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church that during the consecration, the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, a mystery called transubstantiation. Through prayer and reason, we can grow to appreciate this beautiful teaching of the Church, revealed to us by Christ Himself...Our unshakeable belief in the Real Presence of Jesus contained in the tiny host is based on Scripture, Tradition, the teachings of the Church from its earliest times, the writings of the Church Fathers, not to mention the simple and solid belief of Jesus's own Apostles, who witnessed the Institution of the Eucharist first-hand at the Last Supper.

This knowledge should animate every part of our very lives and should cause us to center our entire being around the fact that Jesus loves us so much that He humbles Himself at every Mass to be truly present with us, desiring to become part of us.

Knowing that the King of the Universe is present in the church with us and is physically being fed to us through the actions of the priest, we should ask ourselves, how can we show proper reverence to Our Lord in the Eucharist?

Once we understand that we are in the very Presence of the Lord, and that we are consuming the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, we are obliged to show reverence by how we receive the Eucharist at Communion.

- First, anyone who presents himself/herself to receive Communion should be a Catholic in good standing and be in a state of grace, that is, properly disposed and contrite of any and all sins (additionally, free of mortal sin, by making use of the Sacrament of Confession).

- Secondly, when the communicant reaches the priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, it is appropriate to make a gesture to indicate respect for Our Lord, commonly a profound bow of the head or a genuflection.
- Thirdly, the communicant should clearly indicate how he/she wishes to receive, either on the tongue or in the hand. If one chooses to receive on the tongue, then coming to a complete stop directly in front of the minister of Holy Communion, the head is tilted back slightly, and the tongue exposed so as to receive the Host reverently and appropriately. If one chooses to receive by hand, then one completely opens his/her hand and places it over the other, so as to have the Host placed appropriately on the flatly exposed hand. The minister of Holy Communion holds up the Host and says “The Body of Christ” to which the Communicant responds “Amen”. The same statements and gestures apply to receiving the Sacred Blood.
- Lastly, if the communicant receives in the hand, then the Eucharist should be consumed either *immediately* in front of the priest, deacon, or EMHC or taking one step aside and consumes it *immediately*. This assures the minister that the Lord has been consumed properly and fitting reverence has been observed. Every avoidance should be made to consume while walking back to the pew.

Following the above steps is of utmost importance in the line for Holy Communion...Not only does this demonstrate proper reverence for Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament, but it reaffirms that receiving Holy Communion is indeed extraordinary, sublime, and life-changing, each and every time. This also provides a powerful example to the children in the parish, whose observant eyes watch everything the adults do - particularly those who may not yet be old enough to receive Holy Communion.

St. Maximillian Kolbe said, "Be a Catholic: When you kneel before an altar, do it in such a way that others may be able to recognize that you know before Whom you kneel." If I may, I would also assert that the same could be said of reception of the Eucharist: when you receive Jesus in the Eucharist, do it in such a way that others may be able to recognize that you know Whom you are receiving.

I invite you to explore the many resources available at Our Lady of Guadalupe to strengthen your belief in the Real Presence and to understand more fully how blessed we are as Catholics to be part of this miraculous event every time we attend Mass. We are pleased to be able to offer free access to FORMED and WORD on FIRE ENGAGE, both are multimedia treasure troves of Catholic movies, books, and catechesis in both English and Spanish. Additionally, Deacon Brady and I are available to discuss in person what the Church teaches on this most essential topic or any other teaching of the Church for which you may want clarification or insight.

Thank you once again for your commitment to our parish and witness to our Catholic faith. Please be assured of my prayers for a deepening faith in our families, as we continue to grow disciples and make Church matter.

Devotedly Yours in Christ,

Reverend Monsignor Joseph P. Gentili, STD