

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ June 6, 2021

Let's take a minute to look back over the past year. Most of us have probably never known a time like it when churches were closed and we were unable to go to Mass. What we had previously taken for granted - being able to gather as a community of faith to hear God's word and receive Holy Communion - was no longer there for us.

What were those months like for you? Did you miss receiving our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament or were you glad to have an extra hour for yourselves on Sunday? Did you feel the absence of Jesus in your life or did it make no difference? Did you long to be able to come to Mass again and receive Jesus or did you get used to not coming to church?

If we are honest with ourselves, we probably experienced all those feelings at one time or another during the past year.

It is a helpful thing, though, for us to look back on the experience of the pandemic and ask what being away from the Eucharist meant for us. We often only discover what something means to us when it is taken away. What was it like for you to have Jesus's Body and Blood taken away from you? What did it teach you about your relationship with God?

Whether we were sad or indifferent, there is one thing we can be sure of. Jesus longed to be reunited with us in Holy Communion. Even if going so long without receiving the Eucharist made no difference to us, it made a difference to Him. Jesus gave us His Body and Blood at the Last Supper so that He could be intimately united with us throughout our lifetime. So, whenever it is taken away from us, He feels it profoundly. So great is His love for us.

It is true that, when we couldn't gather in church, there were other ways that we could stay connected to Jesus. We could continue to pray and read the Bible at home. We could watch the Mass on TV or live streamed on our computer. We could make acts of spiritual communion. All those were ways of inviting Jesus' presence into our lives. But, there is nothing that compares to receiving Holy Communion. The Eucharist is the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. It is not merely a symbol. It is not merely a way of remembering Him. Rather, in the Eucharist, the Risen Jesus is truly present. The bread and wine become His Body and Blood. We receive Him and are united with Him in the most intimate way possible. Through our body, He enters into our heart and soul. There is no other way of uniting ourselves more fully with Jesus than through Holy Communion.

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Today we hear the account of the Last Supper as told by St Mark. In St Luke's gospel, Jesus begins the Last Supper by telling the apostles, "With all my heart I have longed to eat this Passover with you before the time comes for me to suffer" (Luke 22:15). In those words, we can hear the love in Jesus' heart. He longed to give His Body and Blood to the apostles and He longs to give it to us.

That is why He gave us the Eucharist in the first place - because He longs for you and for me. He longs to be united with us, to live in us, and to be loved by us.

How sad it must make Jesus that so many people do not believe in his Real Presence in the Eucharist. How sad it must make Jesus that so many people do not receive this great gift of His love and are indifferent to it. How sad it must make Jesus that He is present every day in every tabernacle in every Catholic parish and so few people come to spend time with Him.

Let us make a point, then, of consoling the heart of Jesus by receiving Holy Communion as often as we can. And when we do receive, let us be reverent, reflecting on the immense gift that Jesus gives us. Let us also receive Him with great love, pledging that, just as He has given Himself entirely to us, we will give ourselves entirely to Him. And, whenever possible, let us make a point of spending time before the Blessed Sacrament, praising Him, and letting Him know that we appreciate with all our hearts this great gift He has given us.

Another way we can please God is by sharing with others what the Eucharist means to us. If our hearts have been changed and if we have grown spiritually through receiving Holy Communion, we should tell our family and friends about it. If we watched a TV show that we liked or if we discovered a new product that worked well, wouldn't we tell our friends about it? How much more should we share with them the most important thing of all - the life-changing encounter with Jesus we experience every time we receive Holy Communion.

On this Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus, it is important for us to reflect on what the Blessed Sacrament really means to us. Who knows if it will be taken away from us again? While we are able to approach the altar, let us do so with all the love in our hearts. Let us also be mindful that, once we receive Him, He remains in our heart and soul so that He can be with us and so that we can share Him with others.

At this Mass, we will have a real encounter with the Risen Lord. He gives us His Body and Blood in the form of bread and wine so that we may be intimately united with Him. He longs to give Himself to us and He longs for us to receive Him with reverence

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and love.