

Seven Sacraments Our Encounter with Christ

Eucharist: The Source and Center of the Christian Life

Last week I wrote about Confirmation as the sacrament by which we are sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we can witness and proclaim the gospel to the world. This week, I am writing about the Eucharist, the third sacrament of Christian initiation, the sacrament by which we enter into an intimate communion with our crucified and risen Lord.

The Eucharist is the sacrament with which we are most familiar; it is also the sacrament we most treasure as Catholics. If you attend Mass on a regular basis, you probably receive the Eucharist weekly. And indeed, you should. For, the Eucharist is our food for the journey that is the Christian life. It is our participation in the body and blood of the Lord that unites us with all of God's holy people in the church, which is the body of the risen Christ.

First, *the Eucharist is food for the journey that is the Christian life*. The Christian life is a journey that we make with Christ as we move closer and closer to the fullness of life, which is resurrection life. But a journey can be a long and arduous process, a time when we get discouraged and tired. This is what happened to God's People, Israel, during their long sojourn in the desert as they journeyed to the Promised Land. During that journey, the Book of Exodus tells us, God fed his people with bread from heaven, call Manna. The Eucharist is the true Bread from Heaven because it is the very Body and Blood of Christ, which nourishes and strengthens us so that we can complete the journey of the Christian life.

Second, *the Eucharist is the sacrament whereby we enter into a personal and intimate union with the crucified and risen Christ*. When we receive the Eucharist, we are united with Christ and all of God's holy people. Christ enters our life, and we enter into the life of the risen Christ. And as we enter into the life of the risen Christ, we are joined ever more closely with all God's people in the Church, which is the Body of Christ. Thus, when we are united with Christ, we are united with each other in Christ.

Third, *the Eucharist is our pledge of eternal life*. In the St. Gospel of John, Jesus promises that he will raise up from the dead those who share in the gift of his body and blood. Every time we receive the Eucharist, then, we are receiving the seed of eternal life. Every time we share in the body and blood of the Lord, we become more like our risen and crucified Lord. And as we grow into him, we are given the promise of resurrection life.

As you receive the Eucharist today, consider the gracious gift that has been given to you. You are entering into the most intimate union with the risen Christ who promises you eternal life and unites you, in himself, with all God's People, living and deceased.

Next week, I will consider the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the first of two sacraments of healing, whereby we are restored to a new and deeper relationship with Christ when we sin.

Father Matera

The Feast of All Saints (Tuesday)

Masses at 8:00AM 12:15 PM and 6:00 PM

The Feast of All Souls (Wednesay)

Mass at 8:00 AM

Memorial Mass at 7:00