



THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

Today we celebrate the great Solemnity of the Body & Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi).

I feel it is always a good time for us to review our Catholic beliefs. So in keeping with that idea, I would like to offer some excerpts from the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) regarding Eucharist.

The Church understands the Communion Procession, in fact every procession in liturgy, as a sign of the pilgrim Church, the body of those who believe in Christ, on their way to the Heavenly Jerusalem. All our lives we who believe in Christ are moving in time toward that moment when we will be taken by death from this world and enter into the joy of the Lord in the eternal Kingdom he has prepared for us. The liturgical assembly of the baptized that comes together for the celebration of the Eucharist is a witness to, a manifestation of, the pilgrim Church. When we move in procession, particularly the procession to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Communion, we are a sign, a symbol of that pilgrim Church "on the way."

This action by Christ's body, the Church assembled for the Eucharist, is manifested and supported by the Communion Chant, a hymn in praise of Christ sung by the united voices of those who believe in him and share his life. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* takes this hymn very seriously, mandating that it should begin at the Communion of the priest and extend until the last person has received Communion.

Finally, the fact that the Communion Procession is a profoundly religious action tells us something about the way in which we should participate in this procession. We are the Body of Christ, moving forward to receive the Christ who makes us one with himself and with one another. Our procession should move with dignity; our bearing should be that of those who know they have been redeemed by Christ and are coming to receive their God!

The *General Instruction* asks each country's Conference of Bishops to determine the posture to be used for the reception of Communion and the act of reverence to be made by each person as he or she receives Communion. In the United States, the body of Bishops determined that Communion should be received standing, and that a bow is the act of reverence made by those receiving. These norms may require some adjustment on the part of those who have been used to other practices, however the significance of unity in posture and gesture as a symbol of our unity as members of the one body of Christ should be the governing factor in our own actions.

Those who receive Communion may receive either in the hand or on the tongue, and the decision should be that of the individual receiving, not of the person distributing Communion. If Communion is received in the hand, the hands should first of all be clean. If one is right handed the left hand should rest upon the right. The host will then be laid in the palm of the left hand and then taken by the right hand to the mouth. If one is left-handed this is reversed. It is not appropriate to reach out with the fingers and take the host from the person distributing.

The person distributing Communion says audibly to each person approaching, "The Body of Christ." This formula should not be altered, as it is a proclamation which calls for a response of faith on the part of the one who receives. The communicant should audibly respond, "Amen," indicating by that response his or her belief that this small wafer of bread and the wine in this chalice are in reality the body and blood of Christ the Lord.

- Jim Madura