

COMMUNION



March 27, 2020

by Father Mark Payne

For us Catholics, one of the saddest consequences of the global pandemic the world is suffering is the inability to participate in person at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the celebration of Eucharist. Above all else, we miss receiving Holy Communion. Recalling the words of Jesus, we Catholics profess that, in the celebration of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest. Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. . . . For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (Jn 6:51-55). The risen Christ is present to the Church in many ways, but most especially through the sacrament of his Body and Blood.

In our longing for the Eucharist, we may look for other ways to receive Christ. We know the body of

Christ is kept or "reserved" after the Mass. We know we cannot attend Mass, but could we get access to the reserved Eucharist? There are several pastoral reasons for reserving the Blessed Sacrament, most importantly to be used for distribution to the dying (Viaticum) and the sick, and for prayerful Eucharistic Adoration. However, the celebration of the Eucharist in the Sacrifice of the Mass is truly the origin and the end of the worship given to the Eucharist outside of Mass (Redemptoris sacramentum, 129.) Some practices like the celebration of Mass followed by distribution of Communion in a Church parking lot are not in keeping with this reality. The host will still be the real presence of Christ, but this would not be in keeping with the origin, the goal and the respect the Eucharist properly deserves.

Our present inability to receive Communion becomes a true Lenten fasting. One that makes us especially mindful and in solidarity with the many Catholics around the world who are not able to receive Communion as often as we were used to receiving.