

## THE BEAUTY OF THE MASS—Parts 8 & 9

By the way, under ordinary circumstances, non-Catholics cannot receive the Eucharist in a Catholic Church. And the corollary is also true: Catholics are not to receive Communion in a Protestant church.

Why these restrictions? Is the Church being mean-spirited or hypocritical? No! The Church is simply asking everyone to be honest. In 1 Corinthians 10: 17, St. Paul says, "*Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*" What Paul is telling us in this text is when we share Eucharist with others we are making a public statement that we are one in faith with them and that we are in full communion with the truth that Jesus left to His Church. In other words, when a person receives Holy Communion, that person is not only professing faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but that person also is publicly proclaiming that he or she is a "fully and faithfully practicing Catholic."

The Church also wants to protect the integrity of the non-Catholic party. If a person is not a Catholic, we love and reverence that person for who he or she is. But, for a non-Catholic to receive Holy Communion, that action is tantamount to publicly proclaiming that he or she is a practicing Catholic—something that that person is not ready or willing to say.

Although we do share some elements of belief in common with our Protestant brothers and sisters, unfortunately, we are not yet "*one in faith*" that we can honestly come together and partake of "*the one bread*" and share intercommunion

What about those who are unable to receive the Eucharist for one reason or another? The Bishops tell us, "*All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.*" Although they cannot receive him in Holy Communion, they can receive the Lord in

another way, by asking Jesus into their hearts so they can have a "*Spiritual Communion*" with him. I know many of you have been doing this when you watch a live stream Mass.

Also all those who are not able to receive Communion are still invited to come to one of the priests or the special ministers of the Eucharist, with their arms crossed over their heart, to receive a blessing at communion time.

Finally, whenever people gather together as Mass, the main mood should be one of friendliness and hospitality. Hospitality is the universal language that cuts across every barrier and makes people feel welcome.

Sometimes we are not friendly or welcoming to our brothers and sisters who come to worship with us. For example, we demand to sit at the end of the pew, and make others crawl over us. Instead, we should sit in the center of the pew when we first enter as an invitation for others to come and sit next to us. When we insist on sitting at the end of the pew, we are saying that all we are interested in is ourselves: getting in here, getting this done with, and getting out. Obviously, if someone has a handicap or a disability, that's a different story. We need to be aware of this and reach out to him or her appropriately.

Another question we might ask ourselves is: "*What do people see when they sit next to us?*" Do they see a smiling, welcoming face, or do they see us sitting there just totally isolated in our own little world? That's not what the Catholic Christian community is about. We are here to be a community of brothers and sisters, to help support one another, to be a witness to our faith and to offer the hospitality that Jesus showed everyone.