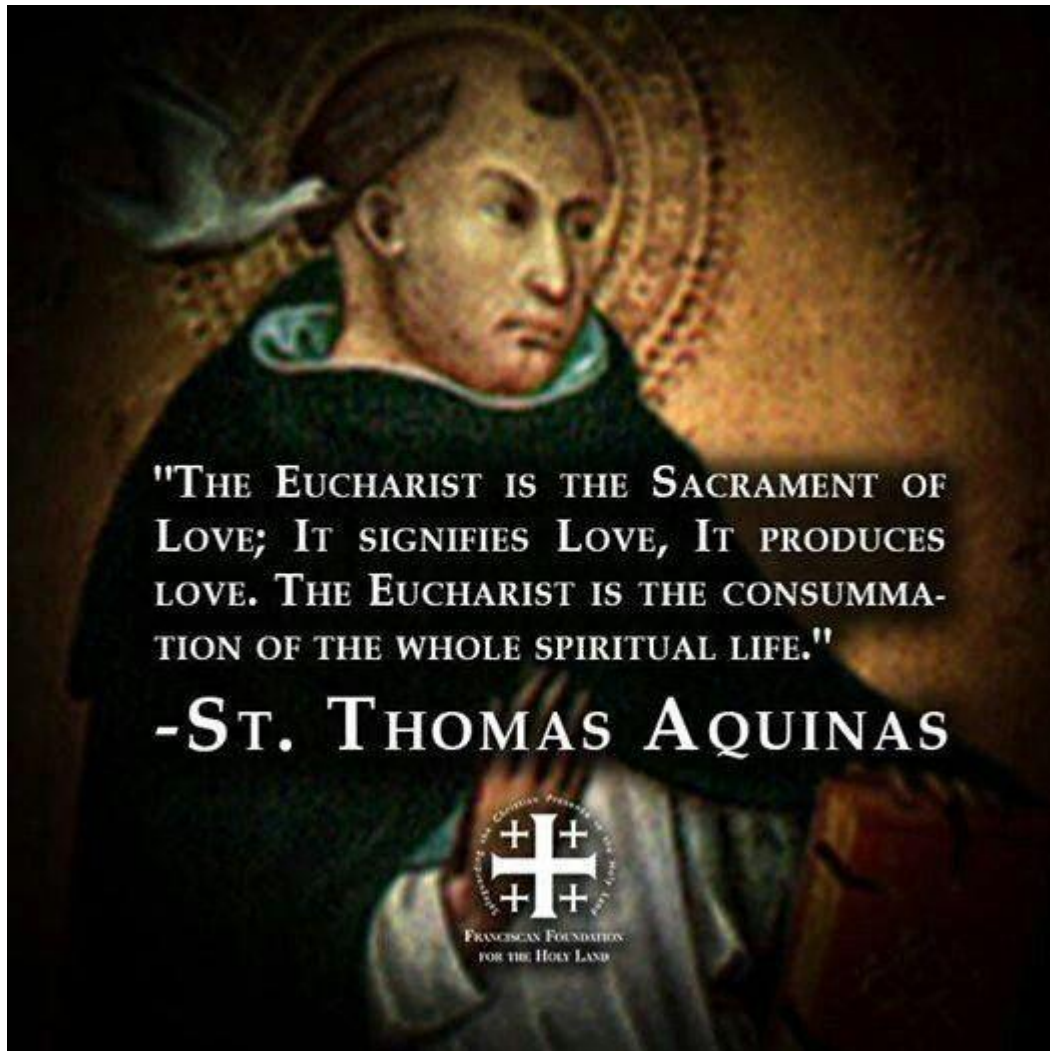


FROM FATHER JOHN – *“Shout joyfully to God, all the earth, sing praise to the glory of his name; proclaim his glorious praise. Say to God, ‘How tremendous are your deeds!’ ‘Let all on earth worship and sing praise to you, sing praise to your name!’ Come and see the works of God, his tremendous deeds among the children of Adam. He has changed the sea into dry land; through the river they passed on foot; therefore let us rejoice in him. He rules by his might forever.” ~ Psalm 66*

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy, Alleluia!



Here is the direct link to the readings for Wednesday of the Third Week of Easter.

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/042121.cfm>

The *Bread of Life Discourse* is the 22nd through 59th versus of the 6th chapter of John's gospel reading. Today's gospel (verses 35 to 40) is right in the middle of our Lord's discourse on the Bread of Life. We continue reading the *Bread of Life Discourse* through Saturday of this week.

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that it is in the nature of human beings to be led by corporeal things and things that are perceptible to the senses to the things that are spiritual and intelligible; that Divine Providence provides for everything in accordance with its nature. Therefore, it is fitting that God should provide a means of salvation for humankind in the form of certain corporeal and sensible signs which we call sacraments.

According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, the sacraments are not mere signs; they do not merely signify Divine grace, but in virtue of their Divine institution, they cause that grace in the souls of men and women. "*Signum sacro sanctum efficax gratiae*" -- a sacrosanct sign producing grace, is a good, succinct definition of a sacrament of the New Law.

Our Lord Jesus gives us the Eucharist, His Body and Blood, in *The Bread of Life Discourse*, at the Last Supper and throughout the sacred scriptures. When we partake in the Eucharist and receive His Body and Blood, He gives us grace; real and tangible grace that is perceptible to us through our senses.

Grace is efficacious within us. It changes us for the better as the Lord touches our heart and soul in His act of Grace. The best analogy I can think of is the analogy of a heart surgeon. If I needed open-heart, triple bypass surgery, an anesthesiologist would put me under anesthesiology, the surgeon would open my chest up, and surgically repair my cardiac system through the mechanism of establishing the bypasses that I need.

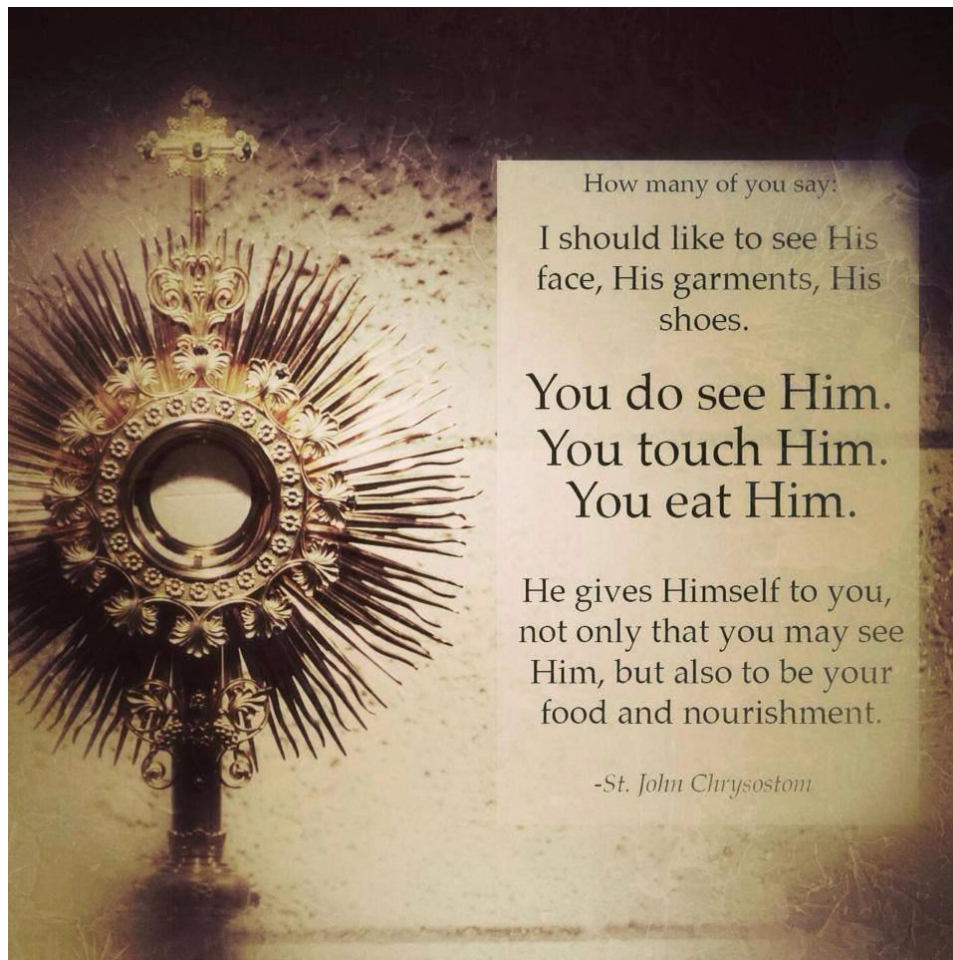
But, I would be sound asleep. I would not be able to feel a thing while the surgeon was working inside me. All I would know is that I went to sleep, the surgeon went in and did his thing and then I woke up and I was better! I would have no idea what the surgeon really did, how he accomplished what he accomplished, what he did in the process of healing me, etc. All I know is that I have changed for the better.

Grace works the same way. The Lord goes in and touches our hearts and souls with His grace. We don't always feel His touch, we don't always know how the Lord has touched us, we don't always recognize the changes He's made within us, etc. All we know is that the Lord has given us His Grace; that He has touched our hearts, our minds, our souls and, out of love for us, He has made us better!

This happens every single time we receive His Body and Blood. It happens every single time we receive any of the sacraments. People have told me that they do enjoy watching our celebration of the mass from home but that Spiritual Communion is not the same as physically receiving the Eucharist.

In one sense, they are absolutely correct because Spiritual Communion is not perceptible to the senses in the same way as Holy Communion is. In another sense, they are not correct simply because God does not require any physical, corporeal or perceptible things to share His Grace with us.

But, the thing to keep in mind is that God has chosen to lead us to spiritual things by giving us grace that is perceptible to the senses because our human nature requires it.



A great example of this is the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance. Over the years, a number of people have asked me why we need to go to confession; can't we just pray to God and ask him to forgive us? In essence, they're asking why do we need the sacrament.

It's pretty simple. God does not need the sacrament but we need the sacrament. And, we need it in a desperate sort of way because, even though God always answers our prayers, sometimes His answer is no. If we just pray to God for forgiveness there is no way for us to really, really know whether His answer is yes or whether it's no.

However, when we go to confession, we know, with absolute certainty, that the answer is Yes, our sins are forgiven. We know with certainty because Christ said to the apostles, ***“Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”*** (Mt. 18:18)

Our Lord Jesus gave the Church the power to absolve sins so that we would know, with absolute certainty, through the priest’s words of absolution, that all of our sins were forgiven. Thus, our Lord Jesus gives us the efficacious grace that comes with His forgiveness by giving us absolute certainty through something that is perceptible to our senses. Namely, the words of absolution within the context of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance.

When we come to mass and receive the Eucharist, when we come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance and receive absolution, when we come and receive any of the sacraments, we receive God’s efficacious grace in a way that is real, that is tangible and that is perceptible to our senses. This grace is a great and glorious gift that our Lord gives us to sustain us on our journey of faith and He gives it to us because of the great and sustaining love that He has for each and every one of us.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

