

#### **4 Minute Teaching – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent 2018**

Today we conclude our four minute teachings on how to best pray at Mass by reflecting upon our reception of Holy Communion.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life—that is what the Catechism teaches us. It is the summit of our Christian life—the purpose of our existence, the goal of our journey on earth, the meaning of life—is to know, love, and serve God and be happy with Him forever in Heaven. Union with God is the whole point of everything. God made us for Himself, and apart from Him we will never find true happiness or real joy. The Eucharist is also the source of our Christian life. When we receive Holy Communion we receive the One Who said “Apart from me, you can do nothing.” (cf. John 15:5) The Eucharist unites us to God in a more intimate way than any other here on earth. The Eucharist gives us the strength to follow God and live the way He calls us to live so that we can be united to Him forever in Heaven.

We receive Jesus in Holy Communion so that we can become more like Him—more loving, more merciful, more faithful, more selfless. Whenever we approach the Altar in the Communion line we should be mindful of Who we come forward to receive. Always strive to receive Holy Communion prayerfully. Saint Augustine once said that if we fail to adore before we receive, we sin. It is appropriate to make a sign of reverence before we receive Holy Communion—either a genuflection, or a bow is a sign of our reverence and adoration towards Him Whom we are about to receive. It is a good idea to make this sign of reverence before it is our turn to receive Communion, that way the Communion line will continue to flow smoothly. A good time to make our sign of reverence toward the Holy Eucharist is while the person in front of us is receiving Holy Communion.

It is also helpful to be mindful of how we receive Holy Communion. The Church in the United States gives us two options. We may receive on the tongue, or in the hand. If we receive

on the tongue, we should open our mouth wide enough and stick out our tongue a little bit and hold still. The temptation can be to lean forward as the minister places the Host on your tongue, this can result in the minister getting licked. Let the minister put the Host on your tongue—don't lunge forward in anticipation. It might be helpful to close your eyes as you open your mouth. Communion on the tongue was the universal practice for a long time in the Church. It is a beautiful practice—it makes me think of several places in Scripture where God says that He will feed us by His own hand. “Open your mouth and I will fill it” says the Lord in one of the Psalms. (cf. Psalm 81:10)

If we choose to receive in the hand, we should keep in mind how the Church instructs us to do so: we are to make a throne of our hands, we should receive reverently and carefully so as not to lose any particles. We must always be very careful, even with small fragments of the Consecrated Host, because those small fragments are the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ just as much as a full-sized Host. That is why you see the Priests and Deacons carefully purifying the sacred vessels after Communion. They are careful to consume the smallest particle of Consecrated Host or drop of Precious Blood. If we receive in the hand we place our dominant hand underneath our other hand. We should make our hand flat, so that the Sacred Host won't slide to the floor. After the minister places the Host in our hand, we should receive right away by taking Our Lord in our dominant hand and consuming it directly. We ought to receive right away so that the minister can see us receive. Sometimes, people begin to walk away with the Host and the ministers are trained to watch to make sure that the Sacred Host gets consumed. On a few occasions there have been Hosts found here in church after Mass. As a result, I have instructed the ministers to try to watch to make sure that people receive. If someone walks away and doesn't consume the Host, the minister should go and ask the person to consume or give the Host back.

I hope that these four minute teachings have been helpful. All of them can be found on the parish website. [I believe that most of them can be found in video format on the Facebook page.] May God help you to pray at this Mass and at every Mass with attention and devotion; may you always receive Our Lord in Holy Communion with reverence and love. May you be open to all that God wants to do in your soul at this Holy Mass. May God bless you!