

A Welcome Reception

Virtually all Catholics, even those with a fervent faith in and love for the Eucharist, have struggled with remaining focused when approaching the altar for Communion. It can be easier to catch a friend's eye in the pew than it is to steady our eyes on the unassuming-looking Eucharist. Feeling uncomfortable "in front of everybody" when walking in the communion line can also distract the heart from readying itself to behold God.

There is nothing wrong or unnatural about having this struggle with distractions. As humans, we can not behold the Eucharist, at least with our physical sight, in all of its splendor and majesty. Only angels and a few select people over the centuries have been given that vision and privilege. Saints have remarked that if we were to see with our own eyes, behind the veil of bread and wine, Jesus Christ Himself, we would literally die of love. It would overwhelm us to the point of death. Therefore, because of our limited vision, we must go beyond our senses to keep our hearts focused on Christ in the Eucharist. That is where the struggle lies, quieting our senses and awakening our hearts. Where this struggle becomes an offense to God is when one does not fight to overcome it, because then he/she would be approaching the altar only to ignore Jesus rather than to wholeheartedly receive Him. How do we make this leap, from senses to faith, from halfhearted reception to all-consuming love? Mary, the Mother of God.

At the Annunciation, when Gabriel asked Mary to be the Mother of God, Mary said "yes" with her *whole being*: her heart, mind, and body. Before the Holy Spirit overshadowed her so that she physically conceived Christ, Mary first was called to believe against all human logic that the Son of God would be her own Son and that it would be He who would enter her body. In other words, only by Mary saying "Let it be done unto me according to Thy word," did Christ take on flesh in her womb. When Elizabeth greeted Mary, she attested to Mary's perfect faith in the word of God, "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." Her yes was a perfect yes, the perfect reception, because by it the greatest miracle took place: God became man. Mary who was immaculately conceived (without sin) is the only person on earth who could have received Christ so completely and unreservedly.

In receiving Jesus in the Eucharist, we are to imitate Mary. Before we receive Christ's flesh into our own flesh, we must first, like Mary, welcome Him with our heart and lips. We must first say, "Amen," "So be it!" Though He be under the appearance of bread and wine, we also must, like Mary, believe against all human senses and logic that the words Christ spoke, "For my flesh is true food and my blood true drink," will be fulfilled and are fulfilled when we consume the Eucharist. We must believe that it is He who enters our body. This kind of faith-filled and unreserved reception of Christ entails a total abandonment, an abandonment that only Mary has perfectly practiced. In short, a worthy reception of the Eucharist *is a participation or sharing in* her most perfect reception of Christ at the Annunciation.

When doubt and distraction cloud your mind as you rise to meet Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, call upon our Lady and ask her to give you her heart, her faith. Ask her to receive Christ with you as she did at the Annunciation.

+All For...+

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