

# LITURGY BYTES

## *The Gift of the Eucharist*

In recent days, research has found that 7 out of 10 people believe that during Mass the bread and wine used for Communion are “symbols” of the body and blood of Jesus. The data goes on to report that only 1/3 of U.S. Catholics say they believe that during Mass the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ. These are shocking facts for sure, especially considering the pandemic and how our practice of attending Mass has been altered. Even though we are open at 100% once again, and many are back in the pews, there remains many of the faithful who have chosen to remain at home. There are many with illnesses who cannot return, which is understandable. However, we need to reach out and offer words of encouragement and support to those who could return. After all, we are not the same without our missing sisters and brothers who make up the Body of Christ. In referencing the statistics mentioned above, I think even more now, the Church has a most important job in her wheelhouse to teach once again the Real Presence of the Eucharist and the importance of receiving Jesus each week at Mass.



The Mass is the greatest prayer known to us. However, it doesn't always seem that way to some people. Here are a few tips that might be helpful:

- Think of someone to pray for at Mass.
- If your mind wanders, try to focus on the words of the hymn, or look at the cross or the tabernacle. Sometimes this change helps you to actually pray and not just say the words of the Mass prayers.
- Try not to focus on those sitting near you or the ramblings of small children.
- If the Scriptures are not making sense, try to find a word or phrase to focus on especially in the Gospel when Jesus is mentioned.
- Try to be especially focused during the Eucharistic prayer when the bread and wine are consecrated and elevated. A silent short prayer here like: *My Lord and my God or Jesus, I love you* will also help re-focus on what is actually happening at this point of the Mass.
- On the Communion line, some people pray again or sing along with the hymn that is being played.
- As you leave the church, try to think of one thing that struck you. Mention it to a family member if you are able too; for some reason, repeating what struck your heart makes it stick even more.

The Eucharist IS Jesus. Perhaps more than ever, we need to receive Him regularly and earnestly. We take to heart this verse from the Gospel of John: “Jesus said to them, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.’” (John 6:53) After all, Mass is the best thing we will do that day, or any day! Make the most of it, and let each of us begin to reach out to others, who are not back at Mass, with a gracious invitation to come, taste and see the goodness of the Lord.



*Have a safe, healthy and blessed week! ~~Michele Hahn*