

Perfected by a Perfect Sacrifice

*Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus
[Corpus Christi]*

Year C

*Genesis 14:18-20
Psalm 110:1, 2, 3, 4 (4b)*

*1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Luke 9:11b-17*

In the 12th century of Christianity, pious practices began to grow around the Eucharist. Out of an exaggerated sense of unworthiness due to personal sin, fewer and fewer Christians received Communion. Instead, people would settle for simply looking at the elevated Eucharist, either at the consecration during Mass, or in the monstrance during Eucharistic adoration and processions through the local town.

In speaking to "Catholics" today, who do not practice their faith, particularly those who do not celebrate Sunday Mass and, therefore, do not receive Communion regularly, I hear many excuses.

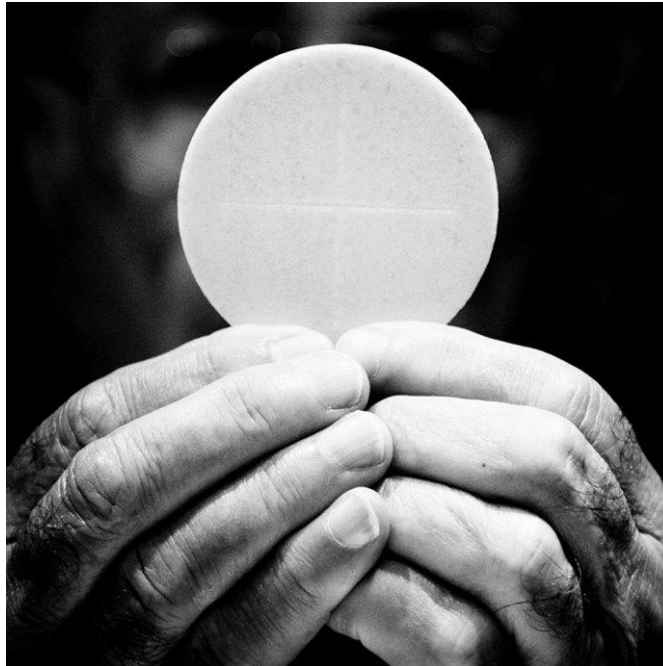
One that is commonly given, grown from an exaggerated sense of self-righteousness, is they do not like the "hypocrisy." In their view, the people come together, praise God, offer prayers, sing, receive Communion, then go forth to live lives with the same corruption with which they came into the Mass. (You should then hear what they say about priests!) To them, is too "hypocritical" of the people to profess a

faith, engage in worship, and then not live it. Therefore, these self-righteous people choose not to go to Mass.

Sometimes, however, I wonder if, in their own peculiar way, they might not have something, which -- whether they know it or not -- touches upon the depth of the great Sacrament of the Altar and the central celebration in the life of every Catholic.

To begin with, one would be hard pressed to find anyone who is not hypocritical and even more so to find one who is not a sinner. All of us are sinners. All of us are hypocritical in one way or another, and, there-

fore, to varying degrees, unworthy. After all, we profess as a united community, "O Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof..." Yet it is as hypocritical sinners that we gather - priests and laity - around the one Sacrament of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. We gather with all of our sinfulness, hypocrisies, flaws, and inadequacies. Yet it is in that gathering, as a community that is the Church, that we



The Holy Eucharist

are brought closer to perfection, by the grace of God, in and through the perfect sacrifice of the Eucharist.

As we celebrate the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, we celebrate that great sacrament that is the center of our lives as Catholic people. It is the celebration of the Eucharist, in which we are united to Christ in a spiritual way, but also in a very physical way. Like any food that is broken down and absorbed into our bodies, this Eucharist, received in Holy Communion, becomes a part of who we are physically. Consequently, those who share this Eucharistic meal, become united spiritually and physically to one another as Church, in and through our union with

Christ.

Despite all of our imperfections, we are formed and molded to a greater perfection in Christ, by the grace received in a sacrifice that *is* perfect - perfect in our union with Christ, perfect in our union as Church, and brought to greater perfection as followers of Christ, who, in the Sacrifice of the Mass, acknowledge our sins, our hypocrisy and our unworthiness, as Christ draws us to communion in and through that perfect sacrifice of His Body and Blood.

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June 8, 2012