

August 20, 2017

Heart of the World XXXVI

We started this series as last year's Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy was concluding. The idea was twofold: to initiate a plan to carry forward the Grace of that time into the rest of our lives, and to look at how we can better cooperate with this Grace in our day-to-day lives. We began with the Eucharist.

In #1324, the Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes from a document of Vatican II where it explains that like the heart in the body, the very center and life-moving force of the Church is the Eucharist—the Heart of the World.

This year (2017) also marks the 100th Anniversary of the appearance of Our Lady to the three children (Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco) at Fatima. We have discussed the prayer that the Angel taught them and have looked at Our Lady's requests and pleas for us to love Our Lord in the Eucharist (as well as prayers and sacrifices for sinners, etc.)

The Angel taught the children how important Reverence (or Piety) is. We discussed that in this column over the winter (end of December into January), but we are now looking at it from the angle of how we receive Holy Communion.

The Liturgical Movement—a theological and spiritual studying and contemplating of how we pray and why, particularly at Mass—profoundly influenced the Council Fathers of Vatican II. The idea of *resourcement* is a principle of this Movement. Resourcement is the studying of the beginnings of things to understand why we now do what we do and if anything has been left behind over the centuries.

One of the practices uncovered by this study is the reception of Holy Communion in the hand. Following Vatican II, this ancient practice was restored in an experimental and provisional way. (More on this next week!)

Last week I shared with you the quote from St. Cyril of Jerusalem's (c313 – 386) teachings that is always cited when explaining the option of receiving in the hand. In it, we find a beautiful expression of piety/reverence.

St. Cyril describes how we are to take and make a throne for The King with our hands—left hand over right with palms up, fingers closed. He speaks of how carefully we are to make sure not the tiniest particle should go anywhere other than in our mouth—the Eucharist being infinitely more precious than the most fragile and valuable thing of this world that is imaginable. As a great privilege, we get to bear Him with honor and reverence from the Altar of the Cross (or perhaps the Cross which is the Altar) to the tabernacle of our hearts.

He also describes how the faithful were to touch the Sacred Host to their eyes. You may note how this was *not* part of the restored practice. Next week a personal anecdote and some more history.

Fr. Michael