

Heart of the World XXXIX

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. September 13th will commemorate Our Lady's penultimate visit.

With Our Lady's messages and the prayers the Angel taught the children as a backdrop, we have been looking at how we arrived at the current practice of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue *or* in the hand. I mentioned last week how the practice of receiving in the hand had a surprisingly convoluted beginning.

A few areas (dioceses) in Europe began the practice in the early 1960's without any consultation with Rome or even neighboring areas. After Vatican II concluded, and because chaos was ensuing, Pope Paul VI began to attend to this situation. After consulting with the bishops of the whole world, in 1969 the Congregation for Divine Worship issue a document (*Memoriale Domini*) which concluded that allowing Communion on the hand "...would be offensive to the sensibility and spiritual appreciation of these bishops and of most of the faithful."

Despite this clear opinion of the world's bishops, later in 1969, the Holy Father decided to strike a compromise. He decided that he would not *authorize* Communion in the hand, however, he did offer to bestow an indult (an exception to the law) *temporarily* allowing it, provided that some conditions were met.

The first condition was that this indult could not be given to a country in which Communion in the hand was not an already established practice. Second, the bishops in countries where it was established must approve of the practice "by a secret vote and with a two-thirds majority."

In addition to these conditions, he also instituted seven regulations. Today we summarize the 1st three: 1) "The new manner of giving communion must not be imposed in a way that would exclude the traditional practice" (of receiving kneeling and on the tongue); 2) "The rite of communion in the hand must not be put into practice indiscriminately." It must be introduced gradually and with catechesis; and 3) "The option offered to the faithful of receiving the Eucharistic bread in their hand and putting it into their own mouth must not turn out to be the occasion for regarding it as ordinary bread or as just another religious article." (The laity's faith in the real presence must be strengthened not weakened.)

Next week we will look at the other four regulations. We will then look at how this practice came to the US, and finally, if the regulations have been met.