

September 17, 2017

Heart of the World XXXX

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.

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. The practice of receiving in the hand had a surprisingly convoluted beginning with some renegade parishes and dioceses in Europe 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. The polled opinion of the world's bishops was strongly against the practice, but in late 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 with a couple of conditions: (1) this indult could not be given to a country in which Communion in the hand was not an already established practice. (2) the bishops in countries where it was established must approve of the practice "by a secret vote and with a two-thirds majority".

He also issued seven conditions. We looked at the 1st three last week. The last four are:

4) There are a few ways to exercise the new rite—including the possibility of the Communicant taking the host from the ciborium themselves. (This was later forbidden.) 5) Whatever procedure is adopted, care must be taken not to allow particles of the Eucharistic bread to fall or be scattered. Care must also be taken that the communicants have clean hands and that their comportment is becoming and in keeping with the practices of the different peoples. 6) In the case of communion under both kinds by way of intinction, it is never permitted to place on the hand of the communicant the host that has been dipped in the Lord's blood. (This practice was later forbidden. Intinction must be practiced by receiving on the tongue from the minister.) 7) Bishops allowing introduction of the new way of receiving communion are requested to send to this Congregation after six months a report on the result of its concession. [Congregation For Divine Worship, Letter "*En reponse a la demande*," May 29, 1969]

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

Fr. Michael