

October 8, 2017

Heart of the World XLIII

As you read this, next Friday is October 13th. That marks the 100th anniversary of Our Lady's last apparition to Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco in Fatima. We have undertaken this series as a way to consider the message of the Fatima event—all of it, not just Our Lady's words, but the teaching of the Angel, too. Using this as a backdrop, recently we have been considering our practice of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue or the hand. Let's see how this all comes together.

The “message” of Fatima can be summed up such: penance, prayer and devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart. If we expand upon penance, we can see reparation, repentance, sacrifice, and the abandonment of sin as well. Finally, if we recall the teaching of the Angel, he taught them how to be fervent, attentive, and composed in prayer, and the reverence we ought to show to Jesus in the Eucharist. Remember the prayer he taught?

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly. I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges, and indifference, by which He is offended. By the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I pray for the conversion of poor sinners.

When we receive Holy Communion, we are being given a gift that is beyond reckoning. It is something so precious and beyond any capacity we can attain to without it. Almighty God makes Himself so small and vulnerable that He can be abandoned, abused, ignored, taken for granted, and handled carelessly with little regard for what we are doing. Anything we can do to increase our awareness of the magnitude of the gift and express appreciation of it is good.

When we receive Holy Communion into our hands and then feed ourselves, we are doing something that we do perhaps tens of times a day. The ordinariness of the gesture can be a powerful witness of Christ's humility. However, it is frequently at His expense. The ordinariness of the gesture requires us strongly to focus on what we are doing in order to receive the Great King with all appropriate reverence—in clean, open hands, with tender care and regard for any crumbs that may remain on our palms or fingers, and to make sure we are not slouching into a psychology of “taking”.

To be fair, you can receive irreverently on the tongue as well. I have witnessed it. But, the gesture itself speaks to the dependence that we have on God to be fed with the Bread of Life in order truly to live.(cf Jn 6)

“Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”(Mt 18:3-4)

Fr. Michael