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## Feast of the Most Holy Eucharist -2020

### Corinthians 11:23-32 & John 6:48-54

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Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Eucharist. In our Epistle reading, St. Paul writes to the Corinthians and explains the importance of the Holy Eucharist. He also leaves no doubt in our minds the significance of Jesus' gift of Himself to us. This gift, The Holy Eucharist, has become the central sacrament of our Christian faith.

It began with the early Christians who made the celebration of the Eucharist the central act of Divine worship. Through the Eucharist, a bond of love united them right from the first days of the Church.

Early Christians knew what the Consecration of the bread and wine meant during Divine Liturgy services. They were repeating, in an un-bloody but real manner, Christ's death and Resurrection. At every Divine Liturgy Christ re-offers Himself, "His body and blood" as a food and drink so we could partake of it and become united to God and one another.

Now, if Jesus did not mean what he was saying (that He will give us his flesh and blood), or if Christ was using a mere figure of speech, He would have called the deserting followers back to clarify his teaching. Instead, he turned to the twelve apostles and asked them if they also wished to leave Him. Peter responded: 'Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. And now we believe and know that you are the Holy One who has come from God' (John 6:68-69).

In offering the Divine Liturgy, we are giving honour to God. By receiving part of the sacrifice, we become closely united with God and with one another. We become brothers and sisters of one divine family, sharing the same sacred meal. We honour God by being present and participating in the Divine Liturgy in the offering of Christ's sacrifice to the Father.

When the priest pronounces the words of Consecration: "This is My body; This is My Blood," there is no more bread, no wine on the altar. Instead, there is the body and the Blood of Christ. The change is called transubstantiation.

The Catholic Church teaches us that in the Holy Eucharist, Christ is truly present with soul and divinity under the appearance of bread and wine. As a living person's body and blood are not separated but they are together with his mind and soul, so in the Eucharist, we have the body, blood, soul and divinity of our living Lord Jesus Christ altogether. This combination is what we call the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

Let me illustrate the above point with this example. Increasingly more of our lives are getting to be incorporated with smart technology. In the past few years, we have seen unusual inventions come our way. Today we can buy a camera in the form of a pen and a voice recorder in the form of a wristwatch. Similarly, in the Eucharist, though the structure is bread, it is indeed the body of Christ; though the form is wine, it is truly the blood of Christ! When we come up for communion, we are not coming up for bread and wine but the Body and Blood of Christ. Therefore, we must approach the Eucharist knowingly and reverently with a clear conscious.

**The real presence of Christ is denied by most Protestants, who say that the bread and wine only represent Christ's body and blood. The Anglicans and Orthodox, however, see it as we do that Our Lord is present in the Eucharist.**

**Taking Holy Communion is a sacred, powerful act, if we approach it knowingly and reverently. When we receive Holy Communion regularly, it produces a unique effect on the soul. It creates a union of the soul with Christ by love. It increases sanctifying grace, blots out venial sins, preserves us from mortal sin and promises us a glorious resurrection.**

**We feel unworthy of receiving the Eucharist if we know that we have a grave sin on our conscience, not forgiven. The Church teaches us that for the forgiveness of our sins, we must go to confession. Holy Communion must be received only while one is in the grace of God. That is very crucial. So, when someone has committed a mortal sin, even if that person is sorry for that sin and wants to receive Holy Communion, that person must confess his sins before receiving Holy Communion. Otherwise, that person commits a grave sin of sacrilege.**

**So, we must approach Holy Communion, understanding it is a severe spiritual act. For those who are not conscious of any grave sin, an act of love of God will cleanse them of any minor faults or failings. Then the Good Lord will make them worthy. He is willing and eager to enter our hearts, but we must prepare a clean, spotless room for Him.**

**Amen!**