

APOSTLES OF THE REAL PRESENCE
Devoted to Restoring the Faith and Understanding in the Real Presence of
Jesus Christ in the Eucharist

UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EUCHARIST AND CONFESSION

Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in a talk on June 15, 1983, in St. Peter's Square in Rome, expressed the following thoughts:

St. Paul, witness of certain divisions that scandalously emerged during the Eucharistic banquet in Corinth, issued a warning intended for the reflection of not only those faithful, but of many other Christians: "Whosoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A man should examine himself first; only then should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks a judgment on himself" (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

Before approaching the Eucharistic table, the Christian is therefore called to examine himself to see if his dispositions permit him to receive Communion worthily. Of course, in a certain sense, no one is worthy to receive as nourishment the body of Christ, and those who take part in the Eucharist confess at the moment of communion, that they are not worthy to receive the Lord into themselves. But the unworthiness of which St. Paul speaks means something else: it refers to interior dispositions that are incompatible with the Eucharist banquet, because they are opposed to welcoming Christ.

Frequent Confession

To better assure the faithful about the absence of such negative dispositions, the liturgy provides a penitential preparation at the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration: that participants acknowledge that they are sinners and implore divine forgiveness. Even if they habitually live in the Lord's friendship, they are aware of their faults and imperfections and of their need for divine mercy. They wish to present themselves at the Eucharist with the greatest purity.

This penitential preparation would therefore be insufficient for those who have mortal sin on their conscience. Recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation is therefore necessary in order to approach Eucharistic communion worthily.

The Church hopes nevertheless, that even beyond this case of necessity, Christians will have the recourse to the sacrament of forgiveness with reasonable frequency in order to foster in themselves even better dispositions. The penitential preparation at the beginning of every celebration must not therefore render the sacrament of forgiveness useless, but it must rather revive in the participants the awareness of an ever greater need for purity, and with that have them increasingly feel the value of the grace of the sacrament. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is not reserved only for those who commit serious sins. It was instituted for the remission of all sins, and the grace that flows from it has a special efficacy of purification and support in the effort of amendment and progress. It is an irreplaceable sacrament in Christian life: it cannot be disregarded or neglected if one wants the seed of divine life to mature in the Christian and produce all of the desired fruits.

For additional copies contact: Apostles of the Real Presence,
P.O. Box 8260, Cranston, RI 02920 or call (401) 943-4171
(This flyer may be copied without alteration for further distribution)