



THE IMPORTANCE OF SILENCE

On several occasions of recent, people have asked about the period after communion. The questions are almost exclusively from people trying to pray and reflect after receiving communion (and while others are still in the process of receiving communion), and having a difficult time due to conversations going on around them. While I know people don't like being told what to do, the communal celebration of the liturgy is one where we need to not only follow the guidelines of the Mass but be somewhat respectful of our brothers and sisters. The following is an article from the recent National Eucharistic Revival. Please take time to read this and reflect on the importance of silence and prayer in the Mass.

After the wonderful moment of receiving our Lord in Holy Communion, we might ask the question "What should we do next?" And the answer is: "PRAY!" After we receive the Most Holy Eucharist and we return to our pew - this is a most opportune time to pray to our Lord, whom we have just received. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal instructs us that this period may be given over to quiet prayer or to communal singing: "When the distribution of Communion is over, if appropriate, the Priest and faithful pray quietly for some time. If desired, a psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may be sung by the entire congregation" (GIRM, 88). The tradition of almost all Catholic parishes has a Communion hymn or antiphon, which began after the priest received Communion, being sung by the congregation. On some occasions, such as certain Solemnities, a post-Communion song, called a hymn of thanksgiving, may be sung. Many authors recommend that, in addition to these, there also be a period of silence.

During the recent National Eucharistic Revival, one of the presenters reminded those in attendance that after Communion a period of silence is important: "The whole Church, the whole community, should take time to give silent thanks. It is important to do so, even if this has to be done after dismissal. This is the moment, if ever, to introduce a time of silence, as recommended also at other moments of the celebration. On the whole, however, the Eucharistic Prayer is much less silent than in the past, and the silence that favors recollection is a value not to be lost. Thanksgiving is absolutely indispensable in its collective form and its personal form. Sacramental effectiveness of the Eucharist does not work automatically. It requires dispositions. Mass itself is a thanksgiving, but thanksgiving does not cease with reception of Communion. It continues and may extend to a hymn or a psalm said in common. There is much singing in the course of Mass, but at this moment it is well to let the peace of silence fall over the assembly"

So, what kind of prayer is fitting during this time? Father Oury (the Eucharistic Revival presenter) notes an anonymous author writing in Syria around the year 300 AD who gives us an example: "After receiving the precious Body and the precious Blood of Christ we give thanks to him for making us worthy to share in his holy mysteries and ask him that this partaking be not for judgment and condemnation but for salvation and the benefit of soul and body, for the preservation of piety, for the remission of sins and for the life of the world to come". Perhaps this is a moment of prayer where thanks pour forth from our hearts as we recognize the wonderful gift we have been given. Maybe it is a moment to ask that we be strengthened for what we are facing. Hopefully, it is a moment to say from our hearts that we truly want to live in God's love.