

Dec. 13-14, 2014

Thoughts from the pastor,

Last weekend my homily was about the authority of a priest that comes from Jesus. I was mentioning all the people who don't believe that it is necessary to go to a priest to confess their sins. They feel they can confess directly to God. What they really need to ask is whether they think it is worth hearing the words, "I absolve you..." Those are the key words. Many of those same people who don't think they need to go to confession still want to receive communion. They forget that the same priest, who they believe doesn't have to be a part of forgiving their sins, is very much a part of communion. He is the one who says the words, "This is My Body." If they don't believe he has any authority then they should just say the words of consecration over their own bread and see what happens. It is the same authority, Jesus, which gives the priest the power to forgive sins with the words I absolve you and to consecrate a host with the words, this is my body. It is not by any worthiness on his own part by which he can do either. Only Jesus has that worthiness but we have to decide whether we will believe he has given it to the priest or not.

I mentioned that a person that doesn't believe a priest has that authority should not go to communion because it would be idolatry. He/she would be coming to worship a piece of bread and a sip of wine, because that is what is there if the priest has no authority. This is a claim that many Protestants will level at Catholics. For some of them have rejected the priesthood. That is why their leaders are called ministers instead of priests. They have no priesthood, they have no confession and they believe communion is just a gathering of people in His Name. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt.18:20)

As Catholics we actually worship Jesus in the form of bread and wine. We have Benediction and Eucharistic Adoration. We have holy hours before the tabernacle. We believe Jesus when He said: "This is my body." (Matt.26:26) There is a big difference in these views. If we are wrong then we are committing idolatry. But if they are wrong they are missing out on an incredible gift that the Lord has given us. They will have fellowship but we the Body of Christ within us.

The problem is that we can't have it both ways. For St. Paul makes it very clear in 1Cor.11:27-28 that if you have not made yourself worthy (through confession and accurate belief) you are in trouble. "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup." That last part of "examine himself" is clarified in the footnotes that the word comes from a Greek word meaning "approved" or "having been tested and found true." This is not something we can do for ourselves. That is why we confess to a priest. He gives the approval.

There is another thing that Catholics are called idolaters for doing. Many Protestants believe we worship Mary. That is more of a word game they play. We do not worship her. We "honor" Mary as the commandment tells us. "Honor your mother and father." If we are brothers of Jesus through baptism then Mary is our mother through adoption.

One last thought, please be generous to your parish this Christmas. Our budget is tight. If you are able to help, please do so.

God bless you all,
Fr. Frank