

HOLY EUCHARIST-THE LORD IS WITH US! On the last two Saturdays, May 7th and May 14th, we had wonderful celebrations of First Holy Communion here at Saint Charles. Congratulations to all the children! All of them did so very well and were so excited to receive Jesus in the Eucharist for the very first time. A few days ago, I received some beautiful handmade cards from the second graders. In the cards, the kids expressed their happiness and gratitude for learning about God and the faith this year. Some of the cards were funny. A little boy wrote, "Dear Father, I hope you become Pop!" But there was another written by a girl that made me think a little bit. She wrote, "Dear Father Jerome, thank you for the Body of Christ. Now I know the Lord is with me!" What a wonderful letter. Of course, these children just made their Holy Communion last week and they are still filled with the excitement and happiness of it all. I wonder why we can't all maintain the joy and fervor of the second graders when it comes to the Mass and the Eucharist? Every Sunday we have the great privilege to receive the Lord in Holy Communion but we take it so much for granted! Saint Thomas Aquinas, doctor and brilliant theologian of the Church described the Eucharist as the "greatest" of the seven sacraments because all of the other ones flow from this one. In the Holy Eucharist we actually receive Christ's own Body and Blood in the sacred host. It is not just a piece of bread or a sip of wine! It is the Lord Jesus Himself- His real presence within us. At every Mass, a miracle really takes place. Through the words of an unworthy priest, bread becomes Jesus's body and the wine becomes His most Precious Blood. The Eucharist is both a sacrifice and a sacred banquet. At every mass offered throughout the world, the sacrifice of Our Lord's death on the cross is re-presented in an un-bloody way. The words of the consecration make reference to this: "this is my Body given up for you" and "this is my Blood poured out for you." On the cross, he literally "gave" his Body and Blood for us sinners. At every mass, the priest offers the same sacrifice that the Lord did on Good Friday but in a different manner. Secondly, the Eucharist is a sacred banquet. We all recall I think that Jesus established the Blessed Sacrament at a special meal on Holy Thursday. He told his apostles to "take and eat." Also, in the Gospel of Saint John, He reminds us that He is the "living bread come down from heaven." The bread of life, of course, is Holy Communion. Just the way we need to eat every day in the natural order to insure our good health, so too do we need to eat the "spiritual bread" which is the Eucharist to preserve the health of our souls! I suppose that the Mass is something that becomes routine for us and we don't appreciate it. But that little girl and her card had it right; in the Eucharist the Lord Jesus is truly with us! That is a great reality and something that we should all give thanks for each time that we go to Mass. This Sunday and every Sunday, may we be grateful for this most precious gift to us and to the church. Let us make this prayer our own: "O Sacrament most holy: O Sacrament divine, all praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine!"

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Jerome