

**Companions on the Journey**

**May1, 2022**

Dear Friends,

Yesterday was our annual celebration of First Holy Communion. We still celebrate this in the latter part of the second grade. Usually the children are at least seven years old or eight sometimes. There has to be a certain level of readiness, a certain degree of understanding that there is something much more important and profound going on than consuming a small wafer of bread. These little ones need to know the story of Jesus Christ and they need to have an understanding of the Last Supper and what happened there and what it meant for the apostles and what it means for us today as contemporary disciples of Jesus.

The little ones realize that they are receiving Jesus. That the Lord is coming to them under the appearance of bread but it is no longer bread. No. Now, through the power left to the Church by Jesus himself, the bread has been changed, transformed into Jesus' own Body and the wine has been changed, transformed into his own blood. Really. And when the Body and Blood of anyone are present, that person is present. And when the Body and Blood of Jesus is present then Jesus himself is present—in a transformed way, but in a very real way. AND. It is possible for us to have a moment of encounter with him, t it is possible to have a sense that Jesus is with us; it is possible for us to feel in our souls that Jesus has come to us. But we need to be taught how to do these things and how to feel these things. It is what those who believe do for those who are starting to believe.

We not only do this in the spiritual aspects of our lives. We do such things in all the aspects of our lives. From our learning how to speak the language and to walk, then move faster, then run, then learning how to ride a bike and kick a soccer ball, or learn to play the piano or the guitar, or how to dance or swim or dive or play a sport, to throw a baseball or shoot a basketball or pass a football. We have to be taught these things and learn how they will make us feel and which emotions they will arouse and under what circumstances.

For almost all of us this is the time of the year when we all made our first communions. We were excited to receive Jesus for the first time. Our parents and grandparents and older siblings and cousins and aunts and uncles and teachers all helped us to learn and to grow. And to know what it means to receive Holy Communion. My friends, none of us is worthy to receive Christ in Eucharist. None of us. But despite that, Our Lord wants us to receive Him in Communion. To experience his presence, to have a moment with Him, an encounter with Him. I would ask you to think back to those early days. And then a question: Is your faith in need of a booster shot? Does your faith need to be rekindled? Why not ask Our Lord to do that for you? He will, of course. Why not ask Him to remove whatever has accumulated upon you over the years and cleanse you anew? Go to confession. More and more people are. And they are mostly kneeling down now behind the screen and not choosing to receive the Sacrament face-to-face. It is your call. But do not stay away. Please. Come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Come back to Communion. Bring your family. Lead your family. Guide your family. Model for your family. The Lord will provide whatever you need. Congratulations to all our brand new First Communicants and their families. If you see them in Church, make a fuss.

In the Peace of Christ,

Msgr. McHenry