

ADORATION 101

THE SACRAMENT OF CHARITY

Participation by Christians who are not Catholic

Moving ahead this week in our examination of Pope (Emeritus) Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist (¶ 56) we come to investigate what the Church orders as far as non-Catholic Christians are concerned when participating in the Liturgy.

It can be a very difficult subject to talk about with family and friends who are not in full communion with Christ's Church yet for various reasons, and who may attend a Holy Mass. They would most likely tend to approach reception of the Eucharist according to their own faith tradition. As practicing Catholics, we must know how to approach this topic with gentleness and humility. It must be pointed out that there is an intrinsic link between the Eucharist and the Church's unity. This unity expresses visibly the fullness of unity that Christ willed for His disciples. When Christians from other faith traditions attend the Eucharistic celebration, they do so as guests, not yet in full communion (unity) with the fullness of faith.

Pope Benedict makes a powerful statement which speaks volumes. He says, "*The respect we owe to the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood prevents us from making it a mere 'means' to be used indiscriminately in order to attain that unity.*" In other words, the Eucharist does not mean just unity with Jesus, Our Lord, but it also means union with His Body, the Church. If a Christian who is not in full communion with the Church receives the Sacrament they express by that very action that they *are* in full communion with the Church when in fact they're not. "*This is the reason why*" the Holy Father continues, "*sadly albeit not without hope, we ask Christians who are not Catholic to understand and respect our conviction, which is grounded in the Bible and Tradition.*"

The Church emphatically holds that Eucharistic Communion and ecclesial (Church) communion are so linked as to make it generally impossible for non-Catholic Christians to receive the former without enjoying the latter. And this is not an insult to non-Catholic Christians. You simply cannot take the most precious aspect of your faith, the very source and summit, and treat it casually and without regard for its dignity and reality. - Paul A. Ray **NEXT WEEK:** Participation through the communications media and of those who are sick