

Dear Parishioners,

This past Sunday, during the 10:30 Mass, an interesting memory passed through my soul. Just after we finished singing the Lamb of God, in that moment of silent prayer as the gathered assembly kneels down, I said the prayer I am supposed to say in silence, but at the same time I remembered my First Holy Communion and the memory struck me as if that event in my life happened just the day before. For a few seconds in that moment of silent prayer it was like I was at St. Joseph Church in Marion, Iowa, longing to go to Holy Communion with my family and everyone else in my parish. Every detail of that event was so fresh in my memory and this profound feeling of joy flooded my soul.

I suppose it isn't very good when the priest presiding at Mass gets distracted. But I do not believe this memory was a distraction. I don't know where it came from, or why it invaded my thoughts at that particular moment of this past Sunday's 10:30 Mass. My guess is that this memory has a more profound meaning than some brief distraction that simply fades away in a flash.

I can say this: the celebration of the Eucharist is carried out in the context of time. Every celebration of the Eucharist is done in a present moment, at a certain time, in a certain place, and in a particular way. However, what we do in memory of Jesus Christ is timeless. Our celebration of the Mass is not a reenactment of what Jesus did at the Last Supper on the night before he died. It is the same meal. We are still gathering in the upper room, and Jesus Christ is the one who holds the bread and says, "Take this all of you and eat it, this is my body which will be given up for you." Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection are not simply past events, historical happenings. His mission is on-going; it is still being carried out even in our celebration of the Mass.

Perhaps that brief flashback during last week's 10:30 Mass was not really a fleeting moment at all. Perhaps it was simply the reality of what the Eucharist is. The Eucharist is an eternal moment of grace in which the life of Jesus Christ is united with our own lives; it is a moment that must not be forgotten. Every Eucharistic celebration is for us an eternal moment of profound joy, infinite union with the Body of Christ. Sometimes it takes a momentary flashback to remind us of the miraculous meal we share as we take and eat, as we drink from the cup, and as we continue to "Do this in memory of me."

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel