

This Sunday, you might see an Ottawa Catholic parish holding a public procession to mark the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi). In this age of spiritual confusion, such a visible witness is important. St. George's has held their procession for several years, traveling between it and the Church of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Similarly, St. Clement's Parish at St. Anne's Church will be on the march after I preside at Mass and give First Holy Communion to about twenty young members. In some parts of Germany, the Solemnity was held on Thursday and celebrated as a public holiday.

The Solemnity commemorates the establishment of the Eucharist, the greatest treasure of the Church. We rejoice for this gift in a way that is not possible on the day it started—Holy Thursday—because of that day's association with Christ's imminent passion and crucifixion.

Compelling Bible passages (John 6.32–71; 1 Corinthians 10.16–17, 11.23–29), the beliefs of the early Church Fathers, and recent Eucharistic miracles bear out Christ's real presence in Communion. For more than 1,500 years in the Churches of the West and the East, this was not credibly disputed. However, following the Protestant Reformation, divergent views on the nature of the Eucharist and sacramental life have been a challenge to Christian unity. This is felt keenly in Germany, the cradle of the Reformation.

Christian unity is not only desirable. It is a commandment! Jesus said, "that they may all be one" (John 17.21). Yet St Paul warns that, "All who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves" (1 Corinthians 11.29). The implication is that we cannot allow people who discern the body

differently to eat at the same Communion table. Unity is important, but unity would be fake without doctrine.

Therefore, opposing intercommunion might appear harsh to some, but rather, it is charitable. It respects the beliefs of both faith communities involved. Partaking in a sacrament is a serious activity, both for the personal spiritual health of the individual and as a public witness to one's beliefs. Appearing to proclaim the Real Presence with one's "Amen" at the Communion rail when one's denomination does not believe it is a betrayal and a deceit. The opposite situation is just as grave. Receiving the Eucharist is intrinsically linked to faith: your personal faith and the faith of the community to which you belong.

Which brings me to Germany. A majority of bishops in Germany have recently proposed intercommunion as a pastoral response to religiously mixed families. This is ill-advised for several reasons. Intermarriage is not a new phenomenon, either in Germany or in Canada. If there is a crisis in religiously mixed marriages, diluting sacramental standards is not the solution. From what I can see, the "open communion" practiced in some non-Catholic congregations is spiritually and pastorally unfruitful.

The temptation is to accommodate rather than to accompany. Accompanying is more work, but it bears richer fruit.

Pope Francis has referred the question back to the German Conference of Bishops. Intercommunion is a doctrinal matter that they will have to discern to be unchangeable. This is an opportunity to review the truth and beauty, indeed the love, inherent in the Magisterium of the Church.

This debate is an occasion to reconsider our own Eucharistic practice. Should anyone who comes to church, even after years of absence, immediately receive communion? Is this appropriate, helpful, and a positive contribution to the salvation of souls?

It is time to renew our declaration of the sacredness of the Lord's Supper.