



**From a Bishop's Journal (674)**

### **The Christian Celebration of Sunday in Expectation of the Eucharist (2)**

I am pleased to share with you Bishop Jean Gagnon of Gaspé's pastoral letter on the Christian celebration of Sunday in expectation of the Eucharist. This theological and pastoral reflection helps us to better understand our Sunday celebration.

#### **Sharing the Word**

"The Eucharistic celebration gathers in itself diverse forms of Jesus' presence, but in addition it leads us to the sacramental action which results in a very special way in the presence of his Body and Blood. In order to avoid taking the celebration of Sunday in expectation of the Eucharist as a substitution of the one Eucharist itself and in order that it be experienced in real expectation of the Eucharistic celebration itself, it is recommended not to follow too closely the order of the mass ritual. On the other hand, that kind of celebration may provide occasions to share on the Gospel and to introduce various prayer forms, which is not always possible during the Eucharist where the ritual is necessarily more stable.

Receiving communion during a celebration of Sunday in expectation of the Eucharist has meaning only if it is done in connection with the Eucharistic celebration that is being presided over by the pastor who is with another community at that moment. The community shall also be in heart and mind with the Sunday Eucharistic celebration of the bishop who, as first pastor of the local Church, watches over it in prayer and assumes the responsibility of keeping it in the right path of the faith. It is therefore important not to separate communion from the Eucharist, because communion is always the sharing of the bread of the family called together by Christ and gathered around its pastor.

The celebration of a celebration of Sunday in expectation of the Eucharist raises several important questions in our communities, among which the main one is the fact that the faithful would not gather on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist. It is therefore important to provide serious and clear catechetical information to make our communities aware of that new situation which reflects our determination to remain a visible gathering of disciples despite the actual situation of poverty in today's Church.

#### **Other Weekday Celebrations**

On weekdays, in communities where the daily Eucharist is no longer possible, it would be a good thing for Christians, even if only a few, to come to church regularly for various types of prayers. Nothing is more sad than a locked-up church! In addition to being a moment of prayer and a witnessing before the local population, these gatherings may become places to experiment and to form the faithful to various types of community prayer.

If on weekdays the prayer chosen is a liturgy of the Word, this one should not be called ADACE which is properly speaking a Sunday Liturgy. In that case holy communion should not be distributed. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives an interesting explanation on that question: “As faith in the real presence of Christ in His Eucharist deepened, the Church became conscious of the meaning of silent adoration of the Lord present under the Eucharistic species”(n° 1379). A moment of adoration, with or without exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, is better integrated into a liturgy of the Word or another type of prayer on weekdays than giving out communion outside the Mass.

### **Practical considerations**

Before deciding to hold any celebration of Sunday in expectation of the Eucharist in a community or pastoral sector, it would be good that the sector’s pastoral council discern seriously the best way of gathering the faithful on Sunday, while giving due importance to the Eucharistic celebration. Questions like the following should be addressed:

- Keeping in mind the population of the parishes concerned in the sector, the age level and physical condition of the people, and other factors such as distances, seasons, festivities, have we established a fair and balanced schedule of the Sunday Eucharist throughout the sector?
- Are there in the community enough persons to justify holding a celebration of Sunday in expectation of the Eucharist, or would it be better to invite the members of that community to join another neighbouring parish in the sector, where the Eucharist is being celebrated?
- On an important feast, would it be advisable to gather all the faithful of the sector for one solemn celebration?
- Do we have in each community persons who are available and well prepared to animate a celebration of Sunday in expectation of the Eucharist?

In preparing a celebration of Sunday in expectation of the Eucharist, it would be good to consider the following criteria:

- Several weeks ahead, make the community aware of the importance to come together on Sunday to celebrate the Word of God when it is not possible to have the Eucharist.
- A celebration of Sunday in expectation of the Eucharist is the action of the whole community, not of an individual only. It shall be organized and led by a well identified team. The pastor shall present that team to the community so as to underscore the communitarian commitment of those persons rather than any individual action.
- The leaders will not use signs that identify the leader of the community, such as the presidential seat or the altar – except to place the ciborium at the time of communion. They shall not wear the alb<sup>1</sup> nor use the Eucharistic prayer. But they will give important attention to the book of the Word of God and to the Table of the Word, namely the pulpit.

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<sup>1</sup>In Southern Victoria presiders at Sunday celebrations in expectation of the Eucharist may wear the alb as a sign that their role is different from that of ministers in other Churches.

– Except for special and very important circumstances, no celebration of Sunday in expectation of the Eucharist should be held in a church where the Eucharist is being celebrated during that weekend. Such situations shall be referred to the bishop.”

+ François Thibodeau *gm*

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.  
Bishop of Edmundston

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