



Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls
Office of the Bishop

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July 29, 2021

Memorial of Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus

Preparing our Hearts to Receive God's Love in the Blessed Sacrament

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During the June General Assembly meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I sensed in prayer I should offer [some comments](#) on whether the U.S. bishops should draft a teaching on the Eucharist. Various bishops offered their thoughts, and voting results were 168-55 to authorize the drafting of a teaching document on the Eucharist, which could then be discussed at a future USCCB meeting. As your bishop, I thought it fitting to offer you some rationale regarding the comments I made at the USCCB General Assembly.

As you may be aware, a 2019 Pew Research Center survey indicated only one-third of Catholics believe the Church's teaching on the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, that is, that the Eucharist is really and truly the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. This is a *very* concerning statistic since the teaching on the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist comes from Jesus himself, in places like John 6:51 ("I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."), Luke 22:19 ("Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.'") and so on.

As your spiritual shepherd, I have the privilege and responsibility to serve all of you and to be an instrument of God's love, acting in Jesus' name as priest, prophet and king: by providing the sacraments to help all of us become holy by receiving God's spiritual help (grace), by passing on our Catholic faith in its fullness, and by governing according to the inherent dignity and integrity of the fullness of what God has revealed. God loved us so much that He revealed to us, as we know from both Scripture and Tradition, what is right, what is wrong, and how we all are called to repent of sin and follow His commandments, which are intended to lead us to holiness here on earth and in its fullness in heaven.

As bishop in our diocese, I also have the responsibility to protect and preserve the inherent dignity in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. In light of the objective truth of the Real Presence of Jesus, all of us are called to refrain from reception of Holy Eucharist if we are in grave sin, i.e. not in the state of grace because we have committed, by our own free will and with full knowledge, a serious sin. Such choices seriously violate charity (love) towards God and others. If we have seriously sinned, Catholics are to earnestly seek God's forgiveness and mercy by repenting of any grave sin in sacramental confession to restore one's right relationship with God and the other members of the Church. God is ever so ready to forgive any of us if we choose to repent and amend our ways. He wants to raise us above the limits of our

personal broken desires and weaknesses through His saving grace. Such humble actions on our part open wide our hearts for the many graces God wants to give us to be healthy, happy and holy as we strive to live out our Catholic faith in its fullness in humble conformity to God's commandments and the Church's teachings God has revealed to us.

As you may also be aware, there has been much publicity surrounding Catholic public figures who persist in choosing and sometimes advocating for objectively serious sinful matters, and who nevertheless, present themselves to receive Holy Communion. If one's personal sin is public, it causes scandal to others because it is a public offense against God and the core components of our Catholic faith, causing hardship and confusion for others. We owe it to God and each other to not persist in serious sin and to not scandalize others or lead others to think it is okay. Rather, as ambassadors of God's love, we are all called to live our Catholic faith in its fullness as revealed by God and then share it with others.

Before the meeting, faithful in our diocese expressed serious concerns to me about how scandalized they are by Catholic leaders who defy Church teachings, choose to persist, and in some cases advocate for, seriously sinful things publicly, and yet receive Holy Communion. This sort of scandal is seriously offensive to God and others, and it can even lead the faithful astray. Some in our diocese and beyond have also shared with me the difficulty it has caused when bishops fail to preserve, protect and teach the faith in its fullness, including the beautiful teaching about the Holy Eucharist and the need to receive it worthily. I agree that both of these are objective and real concerns. It is important we all are united in one, holy, catholic and apostolic way.

In prayer, ahead of my comments at the USCCB General Assembly, my heart and mind returned to the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity to all the teachings of our faith, which I made publicly to God at my consecration as your bishop. In this oath I promised I would teach the Deposit of Faith in its entirety with complete fidelity. It is my belief, desire and intent to be faithful to God and in service to those entrusted to my care as your spiritual father and shepherd. For that reason, I look forward to further discussion with my brother bishops, and in the meantime, I offer these thoughts on the matter of the sanctity of the Holy Eucharist and importance of receiving it in the state of grace to help people understand my comments at the USCCB June Conference.

It is my sincere desire to help you and others on the way to heaven. Our beloved faith teaches that worthiness to receive Holy Communion is a responsibility incumbent upon all of God's faithful. At the heart of this teaching is a great desire to announce the joy that comes from surrendering one's whole life to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose love sets us free. I am constantly amazed at the joy poured out through God's generous love! The Church teaches that as a necessary preparation to this, we must turn away from grave sin and ask God for the grace of deeper conversion. In faith, we can be confident he will answer this prayer, providing graces beyond our expectations.

In the love of God,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Donald E DeGrood". The signature is written in a cursive style with a blue cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Donald E. DeGrood
Bishop of Sioux Falls