THE DAILY BREAD

The Creed of the Apostles



Receiving the Sacraments Worthily

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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The Everyday Apostle

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Approaching the Mysteries With Faith and Reverence

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INTRODUCTION

More Than Going Through the Motions

A man can go to Mass every Sunday of his life, receive Communion a thousand times, and go to Confession at the appointed seasons, and still receive the sacraments as a routine rather than an encounter, going through the motions of actions whose power he has never really tapped. The sacraments work, in a certain real sense, regardless of how a man feels about them; they are the actions of Christ and do not depend on the receiver's fervor for their validity. But how much a man actually gains from them, how much of their grace flows into his life and transforms him, depends enormously on how he receives them, on the faith, the preparation, and the reverence he brings. There is a vast difference between a sacrament received validly and a sacrament received fruitfully, and most men live far below what is offered to them.

This book is about closing that gap: about receiving the sacraments not merely validly but worthily and fruitfully, so that the grace Christ makes available in them actually reaches a man and does its work. It takes for granted the great truth that the sacraments are real encounters with Christ, effective signs that actually convey the grace they signify, and it presses on to the practical question of how a man cooperates with that grace rather than letting it wash over him unabsorbed. The aim is a man who approaches the mysteries with such faith, preparation, and reverence that they become, as they are meant to be, the great engines of his transformation into Christ.

Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. — 1 Corinthians 11:28

We will begin with what the sacraments actually are and the crucial truth that the disposition of the receiver governs how much grace flows. We will take up the Eucharist, the source and summit, and what it means to receive it worthily and fruitfully. We will look closely at Confession, how to make a good one that actually heals and changes. We will consider the preparation and reverence that unlock every sacrament, and the daily life that extends their grace through the week. And we will see how a sacramental life, received well, is the hidden engine behind every good work a man will ever do, because a man can only give to others the life he has first received.

CHAPTER ONE

What the Sacraments Do

Grace, and the Vessel That Receives It

Before a man can receive the sacraments worthily, he has to understand what they actually are and what they actually do, because the whole motive for careful preparation and reverent reception rests on grasping that something real happens in them. A sacrament is not a mere symbol, a pious reminder of a spiritual truth, nor a ceremony that chiefly expresses the community's feelings. It is an effective sign, an action instituted by Christ that actually accomplishes what it signifies, truly conveying the grace of God into the soul of the one who receives it.

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. — John 1:16

Real Channels of Real Grace

The Catholic faith holds that Christ gave the Church seven sacraments as the ordinary channels through which his grace reaches men, real actions that really do what they signify. The water of Baptism does not merely picture cleansing; it actually cleanses the soul of sin and pours in the divine life. The words of absolution do not merely express a hope of forgiveness; they actually forgive. The Eucharist is not merely a memorial of Christ; it is Christ, truly present and truly received. This is the astonishing claim at the heart of the sacramental system: that God, knowing we are bodily creatures who perceive through our senses, chose to convey his invisible grace through visible, tangible actions, so that a man does not merely think about grace but actually receives it through water and oil and bread and word. The sacraments are, in a favorite image of the tradition, the channels Christ dug from the ocean of his grace to the dry land of our souls, and through them flows the very life of God.

The Grace Flows From Christ

A crucial truth about the sacraments, one that both humbles and reassures, is that their power comes from Christ and not from the worthiness of the minister or the intensity of the receiver, so that a man can rely on them with certainty. When a priest baptizes or absolves or consecrates, it is finally Christ who acts through him, and the sacrament's validity does not depend on the priest's personal holiness; even an unworthy minister confects a valid sacrament, because the power is Christ's, not his. This is a great mercy, for it means a man's reception of grace does not hang on the sanctity of the particular priest he happens to have, but rests on the sure action of Christ himself. The sacraments are reliable precisely because their efficacy comes from the Lord, who is always faithful, and a man can approach them with confidence that, validly celebrated, they truly accomplish what Christ promised, regardless of the human instruments involved.

But the Vessel Governs the Fruit

Yet here enters the truth that this whole book turns on: while the sacrament's validity does not depend on the receiver, the amount of grace that actually flows into his life does, because grace is received according to the disposition of the one who receives it. The sacraments are like rain falling on soil; the rain is the same, but how much it nourishes depends on the state of the ground, whether it is open and prepared or hard and closed. Two men may receive the identical Eucharist, validly, and one be deeply transformed while the other gains almost nothing, not because the sacrament differed but because their dispositions did, one approaching with faith, longing, and a prepared soul, the other distracted, unprepared, and closed. This is the reason preparation and reverence matter so much: not because they make the sacrament valid, which Christ does, but because they open the soul to receive the grace the valid sacrament offers. The sacrament provides the grace; the disposition of the receiver determines how much of it actually takes root, and a man serious about the sacramental life gives all his attention to becoming the kind of open, prepared vessel through which grace can fully flow.

This truth cuts against a quiet complacency that many Catholics fall into, the assumption that because the sacraments work regardless of feeling, nothing more is asked of the receiver than showing up. That assumption is half right and dangerously incomplete. It is true that a man need not generate emotion to receive validly, and this spares him the anxiety of thinking the sacrament depends on his fervor. But it does not follow that his disposition is irrelevant, only that the relevant disposition is not feeling but faith, desire, and a prepared soul. A man can bring all of these without any particular emotion at all, on a dry day as on a fervent one, and the man who understands this neither frets over his lack of feeling nor uses that lack as an excuse to bring nothing, but attends instead to the dispositions that actually open the soul.

CHAPTER TWO

The Source and Summit

Receiving the Eucharist Worthily

Of all the sacraments the Eucharist stands supreme, called by the Church the source and summit of the Christian life, because it is not merely a means of grace but the very author of grace himself, Christ truly present under the appearances of bread and wine. How a man receives the Eucharist therefore matters more than how he receives anything else, and learning to receive it worthily and fruitfully is the center of a well-ordered

sacramental life. Here, more than anywhere, the disposition of the receiver governs the fruit.

Whoever eats this bread will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. — John 6:51

The State of Grace First

The first requirement for receiving the Eucharist worthily is to receive it in the state of grace, that is, free of unconfessed mortal sin, and this is not an optional counsel but a serious obligation rooted in Scripture itself. Saint Paul warns in the strongest terms that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, in a state of serious sin, sins against the body and blood of the Lord and eats and drinks judgment on himself. The reason is plain once a man grasps what the Eucharist is: to receive the living Christ into a soul from which one has, by mortal sin, driven him out, as though nothing were wrong, is a grave contradiction, adding sacrilege to the sin already present. The practical rule follows directly: a man conscious of mortal sin must go to Confession before receiving Communion. This is not a barrier meant to keep men from the Eucharist but a safeguard of its holiness and of the man's own good, ensuring that when he comes to receive the Lord, his soul is alive and able to receive the life offered rather than compounding a wound. The ordinary pattern of a healthy Catholic life is simply to stay in grace, receive often, and when grace is lost, be reconciled first.

Faith, Reverence, and Desire

Beyond the basic requirement of the state of grace lies the whole art of receiving the Eucharist fruitfully, and it comes down to the dispositions a man brings: faith, reverence, and desire. Faith, that a man actually believes, and consciously recalls as he approaches, that this is truly Christ he is receiving, not a symbol; the deeper his living faith in the real presence, the more fully he opens himself to the One he receives. Reverence, that he approaches with the awe due to so great a gift, in his bearing, his attention, his whole manner, rather than shuffling forward distracted and casual as though receiving nothing in particular. And desire, that he actually wants Christ, hungers for him, comes longing to be united with him, for the Eucharist is the sacrament of union and it is received most fully by the soul that most desires that union. A man who brings faith, reverence, and desire to Communion receives abundantly; a man who brings distraction, routine, and indifference receives the same Christ but opens himself to little of the grace, like a man offered a feast who barely eats. The whole difference lies in the dispositions a man cultivates before he ever reaches the altar.

Make a Thanksgiving

One simple practice does more than almost any other to deepen the fruit of Communion, and it is widely neglected: making a genuine thanksgiving after receiving, spending the minutes after Communion in conscious, grateful, intimate attention to the Christ a man has just received. These are, the saints insisted, the most precious minutes of a man's week, when Christ is sacramentally present within him in a unique way, and they are not minutes to be squandered glancing around the church or mentally moving on to lunch. A man who, having received, spends even a few quiet minutes in loving thanksgiving, speaking to the Lord within him, adoring him, asking his help, resting in his presence, draws from Communion a fruit that the man who receives and immediately disengages never tastes. This costs nothing but attention, and it transforms the Eucharist from a momentary ritual into a real and lingering encounter. The practice of a true thanksgiving after Communion is one of the simplest and most powerful ways a man can receive the source and summit of his faith as the intimate meeting with Christ it is meant to be.

CHAPTER THREE

A Confession That Heals

Making the Most of the Sacrament of Mercy

If the Eucharist is the sacrament a man receives most often, Confession is the one he most often receives poorly or avoids entirely, and learning to make a good confession, one that actually heals and changes a man, is among the most valuable skills of the spiritual life. Many Catholics who go to Confession make it a hurried, superficial recitation that barely touches them, and many more avoid it for years out of fear, shame, or neglect. But Confession, received well, is one of the greatest mercies Christ left his Church, and a man who learns to use it fully finds in it not a dreaded ordeal but a source of profound healing and steady growth.

Confess your sins to one another… that you may be healed. — James 5:16

The Shape of a Good Confession

A good confession has a clear and simple shape, and knowing it dispels much of the fear that keeps men away. It begins with an honest examination of conscience, a real looking at where a man has sinned since his last confession, neither hunting for sins that are not there nor glossing over the ones that are. It requires contrition, genuine sorrow for having offended God, which need not be a storm of emotion but must be a true turning of

the will away from the sin and toward God. It involves the confession itself, the honest naming of one's sins to the priest, including serious sins in their kind and approximate number, told plainly and without evasion or excuse. It asks a purpose of amendment, a sincere intention to avoid the sin going forward, even knowing one may fall again. And it concludes with absolution, in which Christ, through the priest, actually forgives the sins confessed, and with the penance that expresses the man's desire to make amends. None of this is complicated, and a man who understands the simple shape of the sacrament can approach it without the dread that comes from not knowing what to do.

Honesty Is Everything

The single thing that most determines whether a confession heals is honesty, the willingness to name one's sins plainly and completely rather than hiding, minimizing, or dressing them up. The temptation in the confessional is always toward evasion: to confess the respectable sins while burying the embarrassing one, to soften the ugly act with excuses and context, to speak in vague generalities that technically confess without really exposing anything. But a sin half-confessed is a sin half-healed, and the shame that makes a man want to hide his worst sin is exactly the thing that keeps that sin in power over him. The priest has heard everything; nothing a man can say will shock him, and he is bound by an absolute seal that will carry the man's secrets to his grave. The healing of Confession comes precisely through the humbling act of bringing one's sins fully into the light, naming the very thing one most wants to hide, and hearing it forgiven. A man who learns to be completely honest in Confession, to drag his most shameful sins into the open and have them absolved, discovers a freedom and a healing that the man who always holds something back never finds.

Confession as Regular Medicine

Confession bears its richest fruit when a man makes it not an emergency measure resorted to only in crisis but a regular medicine taken frequently, even when he is not conscious of serious sin. Frequent confession does far more than restore grace when it has been lost; it deepens a man's self-knowledge, keeps his conscience sensitive and honest, wages steady war on his habitual faults and venial sins, and pours in grace for the ongoing work of growth. The saints, who had far less to confess than most, went regularly, understanding the sacrament as an engine of transformation and not merely a repair after disaster. A practical rule many find fruitful is to confess monthly, or at least every few weeks, making it a settled rhythm rather than a thing endured only when guilt grows unbearable. A man who confesses regularly stays spiritually healthy, catches small faults before they harden, and is continually drawn forward; a man who comes only when he must is always playing catch-up with sins long entrenched. Received as regular

medicine, Confession becomes one of the steadiest means of a man's growth, and the frequent penitent is, as a rule, the growing one.

For the man who has been away from Confession a long time, a word of encouragement is in order, because it is precisely this man whom shame most effectively keeps away. The length of an absence, the number or gravity of the sins, the embarrassment of not quite remembering how it goes, these loom large in the mind and keep many a man from returning for years. But the priest welcomes nothing more gladly than the return of someone long absent, expects exactly this, and will guide a man gently through whatever he has forgotten. A man need only come, tell the priest it has been a long time, and let himself be led; the sacrament is built for exactly this homecoming. The hardest confession a man ever makes is almost always the one he has been dreading for years, and it is almost always followed by a relief and a lightness that leave him wondering why he waited so long.

CHAPTER FOUR

Preparation and Reverence

Unlocking Every Sacrament

Running through everything said so far is a single principle that applies to every sacrament a man receives: that the grace flows according to his disposition, and that disposition is shaped above all by preparation and reverence. These two, the preparing of the soul before and the reverent attention during, are the master keys that unlock the fruitfulness of the sacraments, and a man who cultivates them receives abundantly where the unprepared and irreverent receive little, from the identical sacraments.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. — 1 Peter 5:5

The Difference Preparation Makes

Preparation is the deliberate readying of the soul to receive, and it makes an enormous difference to how much grace actually flows, because a soul approached cold and unprepared is a soul half-closed to the gift. The man who arrives at Mass at the last second, distracted and unrecollected, and receives Communion without a moment's conscious preparation, receives far less than the man who came early, quieted his soul, recalled what he was about to do, stirred up his faith and desire, and so approached the altar prepared and open. The same is true of Confession approached with a careful examination of conscience versus one approached cold, and of every sacrament.

Preparation need not be elaborate; even a few minutes of conscious recollection, recalling what is about to happen and stirring up faith and desire, transforms the reception. But its absence is costly, and the widespread habit of approaching the sacraments with no preparation at all is a chief reason so many Catholics gain so little from them. A man who forms the simple habit of preparing his soul, however briefly, before receiving any sacrament has done much to unlock the grace that is offered.

Reverence Opens the Soul

Reverence is the attitude of awe and attention appropriate to an encounter with God, and it too governs how much a man receives, because reverence is the posture of a soul that is awake to what is happening and therefore open to it. The casual, distracted, routine manner in which the sacraments are often received is not merely a matter of poor etiquette; it reflects and reinforces a soul that is not really present to the mystery, and a soul not present receives little. Reverence, by contrast, keeps a man awake to the reality before him, and the awakened soul is the open one. This reverence shows in a man's whole bearing, his attention during the liturgy, his manner of receiving Communion, his conduct in the church, but it begins within, as a conscious awareness of the holiness of what he is doing and the presence of the God he is approaching. A man who cultivates reverence, who refuses to let the sacraments become casual routine and keeps alive in himself a sense of their holiness, keeps his soul in the posture that receives, while the man who grows casual and routine, however faithful his attendance, slowly closes himself to the very grace he keeps coming to receive.

Against the Deadening Power of Routine

The great enemy of fruitful reception is routine, the dulling familiarity that creeps over actions a man performs again and again until he does them on autopilot, present in body but absent in soul. Precisely because a faithful Catholic receives the sacraments so often, he is in constant danger of this deadening, of letting the most sacred actions of his life become so habitual that he ceases to attend to them at all, going through the motions of Mass and Communion and Confession while his mind and heart are elsewhere. This is not a failure of faith so much as a failure of attention, and it is overcome not by feeling more but by deliberately renewing one's awareness, consciously fighting the slide into autopilot by stirring up faith and attention each time, approaching each reception as though it were significant, which it always is. A man must wage deliberate war on routine in his sacramental life, refusing to let familiarity breed inattention, continually renewing his faith and reverence so that the thousandth Communion is received as consciously as the first. The sacraments never become less than they are; the only thing that fades is a

man's attention to them, and keeping that attention alive against the deadening power of routine is a central and lifelong task of receiving them well.

CHAPTER FIVE

Living Between the Sacraments

Extending the Grace Through the Week

A man does not live only in the moments of receiving the sacraments; he lives in the long stretches between them, and how he lives those stretches determines whether the grace received takes root and grows or is quickly lost. The sacraments are not isolated events but the high points of a continuous life of grace, and their fruit depends heavily on the soil of the ordinary days into which they fall. A man who receives worthily on Sunday and then lives a thoroughly unspiritual week largely wastes what he received; a man who extends the grace of the sacraments through a life ordered to God finds that grace growing and compounding.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself… neither can you, unless you abide in me. — John 15:4

The Sacraments Need a Life to Grow In

Grace received in the sacraments is a seed, and like any seed it needs the right soil to grow, which means the sacraments bear their full fruit only in a man whose ordinary life is ordered to receive and nurture what they give. The Communion received on Sunday is meant to shape the whole week, strengthening a man against the temptations he will meet, deepening his union with Christ as he carries the grace into his daily round; but this happens only if the man lives the week in a way that cooperates with the grace rather than contradicting it. A man who receives the Eucharist and then spends his week in habits of sin, neglect of prayer, and immersion in whatever coarsens the soul provides no soil for the seed, and the grace, though truly given, finds nothing to grow in. The fruitfulness of the sacraments and the quality of a man's ordinary life are therefore bound together: the sacraments feed the life of grace, and the life of grace, lived out through the week, is what allows the sacraments to bear their fruit. Neither works fully without the other.

Daily Prayer Carries the Grace Forward

The chief way a man extends the grace of the sacraments through the week is daily prayer, which keeps alive between receptions the relationship with God that the sacraments feed. A man who prays daily carries the grace of Sunday's Communion forward into every day, returning often to the Christ he received, drawing continually on the union the Eucharist established; a man who never prays between Sundays lets that union go dormant, so that each Communion must start nearly from scratch. Daily prayer need not be long, but it must be real and regular, a daily returning to God that keeps the soul in living contact with him through the week. This is how the grace of the sacraments becomes a continuous life rather than a series of disconnected moments: the sacraments supply the grace at their appointed times, and daily prayer keeps a man connected to its source in between, so that the whole week becomes an unbroken abiding in Christ rather than a few sacred points in an otherwise godless stretch. The man who pairs worthy reception of the sacraments with faithful daily prayer has built the rhythm by which grace grows steadily, while the man who relies on the sacraments alone, with nothing between, finds their grace forever leaking away before it can take root.

A Eucharistic Life

The deepest way to live between the sacraments is to let them shape a man's whole way of being, so that his entire life becomes, in a sense, eucharistic, an ongoing thanksgiving and self-offering that flows from and returns to the altar. A man formed by the Eucharist learns to offer his daily work, his sufferings, his small sacrifices, and his acts of love in union with the offering of Christ he participates in at Mass, so that the Sunday liturgy and the Monday workday are not separate worlds but one continuous offering. He learns to carry the reverence, the gratitude, and the self-giving of the Eucharist into all his dealings, becoming a man whose ordinary life is quietly suffused with what he receives at the altar. This is the goal toward which receiving the sacraments worthily finally tends: not merely a man who receives grace well in isolated moments, but a man whose whole life has been shaped by the sacraments into a continuous participation in the life of Christ, so that there is less and less distance between the man at the altar and the man in the world, and the grace of the sacraments overflows into everything he is and does.

This is not a lofty ideal reserved for mystics but the ordinary trajectory of any man who receives the sacraments worthily over time. A man does not decide one day to have a eucharistic life and achieve it by resolution; it grows in him, slowly and almost imperceptibly, as the faithful reception of the sacraments week after week quietly reshapes how he sees his work, his family, his sufferings, and his small daily choices. He finds himself, without quite having planned it, offering the hard morning to God, carrying a steadiness from the altar into a tense meeting, meeting an irritation with a patience that

is not his own. These are the sacraments doing their work in him across the years, and the man who simply keeps receiving them well, and living the days between in prayer, finds one day that his ordinary life has become, more than he realized, an extension of the altar.

CHAPTER SIX

The Other Encounters

The Sacraments Across a Life

Beyond the Eucharist and Confession, which a man receives repeatedly, stand the other sacraments, each marking a decisive moment or state of life, and a man does well to understand how to receive and live these too, for they are no less real encounters with Christ. Some a man receives only once, their grace meant to shape an entire lifetime; one he will receive, God willing, at the end. Each deserves to be received with the same faith, preparation, and reverence, and each offers grace a man is meant to draw on long after the moment of reception has passed.

The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. — Romans 6:23

The Sacraments of Initiation Keep Giving

Baptism and Confirmation are received once and never repeated, but their grace is not spent in the moment; it is a permanent endowment a man is meant to draw on his whole life long. Baptism made a man a new creature, cleansed of sin, filled with the divine life, made a child of God and a member of the Church, and that identity remains the deepest truth about him, a reality he can return to and live from every day. Confirmation sealed him with the Holy Spirit and strengthened him for the Christian mission, and that gift too abides, a reservoir of grace for witness and spiritual maturity that a man can consciously draw upon. Many Catholics treat these sacraments as events safely in the past, done and finished, but the mature man understands them as permanent sources he can keep returning to, stirring up the grace of his Baptism and Confirmation, living consciously from the identity and the power they gave. The grace of these once-received sacraments is meant to be activated and lived, not filed away, and a man who learns to draw on them finds in his own Baptism and Confirmation a deep and continuing well of grace.

Marriage and Holy Orders as Lived Sacraments

For most men their state in life is itself sacramental or ordered toward holiness, and the grace of that state is meant to be lived and drawn upon daily rather than received once and forgotten. A married man received in the sacrament of Matrimony a grace specifically given to help him love his wife as Christ loves the Church, to be faithful, to sanctify his spouse and raise his children in the faith, and that grace is available to him every day of his marriage, a divine help he can consciously draw on in the ordinary labor of loving his family well. The sacraments of one's state in life are not ceremonies completed on a wedding or ordination day but ongoing sources of grace for the vocation they consecrate, and a man lives them worthily by consciously relying on their grace to meet the duties they entail. A man who understands his marriage as a sacrament, and draws daily on the grace it provides for the hard and holy work of self-giving love, lives that sacrament worthily and finds in it the strength to be the husband and father he is called to be.

The Sacraments of Healing in Time of Need

Finally there are the sacraments given for times of weakness and suffering, and a man does well to know them and to receive them without fear or delay when their hour comes. The Anointing of the Sick is given to those seriously ill or facing the weakness of age or the danger of death, and it confers a grace of strength, peace, and courage to bear suffering in union with Christ, the forgiveness of sins, and sometimes physical healing; it is not, as many fearfully suppose, a sentence of imminent death, but a powerful help for the sick, to be sought early and not left until a man is beyond receiving it consciously. A man should not fear this sacrament or put it off, but welcome it as the strengthening grace it is whenever serious illness or the frailty of age comes upon him or those he loves, and he should see that his dying friends and family are not deprived of it. To receive the sacraments of healing worthily is to approach them with the same faith that God is truly acting through them, bringing to the bed of sickness the same confidence in Christ's real help that a man brings to the altar in health. These sacraments are among the tenderest of Christ's mercies, given precisely for the hardest hours, and a man receives them worthily by welcoming them with faith when those hours come.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Received to Be Given

The Sacramental Source of the Mission

There is a final purpose to receiving the sacraments worthily, one that lifts the whole subject beyond a man's private spiritual benefit: the grace a man receives is given to him not only for himself but to be poured out through him on others. A man cannot give what he does not have, and the sacraments are where he gets what he is meant to give. The worthy reception of the sacraments is therefore the hidden engine behind every apostolic work, the secret source from which a man's whole capacity to love and serve and witness is continually resupplied.

You received without paying; give without pay. — Matthew 10:8

You Can Only Give What You Have Received

The whole of a man's mission to others runs on grace, and that grace is not generated by his own effort but received, chiefly through the sacraments, which makes his faithful reception of them the precondition of everything he hopes to do for others. The patience a man shows his family, the love he brings to the difficult, the courage of his witness, the strength to forgive and to serve, none of these finally comes from his own natural resources, which run out, but from the grace of God received and drawn upon. A man trying to pour himself out in service while neglecting the sacramental sources of grace is like a man trying to irrigate a field from a well he never refills; he runs dry, and his efforts, however well meant, falter for lack of the grace that alone could sustain them. The man who receives the sacraments worthily and often, by contrast, is continually resupplied, able to give because he is always receiving, his capacity to love and serve others constantly renewed at the sources where grace is found. This is why the sacramental life is not in competition with the active life of mission but its very foundation: a man gives to others out of the fullness he receives from Christ, and the sacraments are where that fullness is poured into him.

The Eucharist Sends a Man Out

It is no accident that the Mass ends with a sending, for the Eucharist that a man receives is meant to overflow into mission, to make of him one who carries Christ into the world. Having received the Lord himself, a man is sent from the altar to bring the love he has received to everyone he meets, to be, in a real sense, a bearer of Christ into the places the liturgy cannot reach. The grace of the Eucharist is not meant to terminate in a man's private consolation but to make him apostolic, to send him out strengthened and filled to love and serve and witness. A man who grasps this receives the Eucharist not only for his own comfort but as equipment for his mission, drawing from it the strength to go and do what Christ asks of him in the week ahead. The dismissal at the end of Mass is a commissioning, and the man who has received worthily goes out as one sent, carrying

into the world the Christ he has received, which is the deepest meaning of a eucharistic life poured out in love.

The Well-Fed Apostle

The apostle the world needs, then, is finally a well-fed one, a man whose capacity to give has been built and is continually replenished at the sacramental sources of grace, and this reframes the whole relationship between a man's interior life and his active mission. Far from the sacraments being a private devotion that competes with the real work of serving others, they are the very thing that makes effective service possible, the regular feeding without which a man has nothing to give. A man serious about his mission will therefore be serious about the sacraments, not as an unrelated piety but as the fueling of the engine, understanding that his usefulness to God and others rises and falls with the grace he receives and draws upon. The most effective apostles have always been the most sacramental men, not by coincidence but by necessity, because they understood that they were only channels of a grace that originated elsewhere and had to be continually received before it could be given. To receive the sacraments worthily is thus the first and most practical act of a man's apostolate, the filling of the vessel that all his service will pour out, and the man who attends to it faithfully becomes the well-fed apostle who has always something to give because he is always being fed.

CONCLUSION

Approach the Mysteries Well

The sacraments are the great gift Christ left his Church, the channels he dug from the ocean of his grace to the dry ground of our souls, and they are given to a man not to be received as routine but to be approached as the real encounters with Christ they are. This book has been about approaching them well: understanding that the grace flows according to a man's disposition, receiving the Eucharist with faith and reverence and a true thanksgiving, making confessions that heal through honest humility, preparing the soul and fighting the deadening power of routine, extending the grace through a life of daily prayer, and drawing on every sacrament across the whole arc of a life.

The difference between receiving the sacraments validly and receiving them fruitfully is the difference between a man who goes through the motions and a man who is genuinely transformed, and it lies almost entirely in what a man brings: his faith, his preparation, his reverence, his desire, his honesty. The sacraments are always giving everything Christ placed in them; the only variable is how open a man is to receive. And the whole point of

becoming a worthy receiver is not a private spiritual achievement but the filling of a vessel meant to be poured out, for a man can give others only the grace he has first received.

So approach the mysteries well. Prepare your soul before you receive; stir up your faith and reverence against the pull of routine; make your Communions with desire and your thanksgivings with love; bring your sins honestly to Confession and let it heal you; draw on the grace of every sacrament across your life; and extend all of it through faithful daily prayer into the ordinary days between. Do this, and the sacraments will become what Christ meant them to be in you: not rituals endured but encounters that transform, the steady engine of your growth into Christ and the inexhaustible source from which you give to others the grace you have first received. Receive worthily, and you will have always something to give.

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Receiving the Sacraments Worthily: Approaching the Mysteries With Faith and Reverence is part of The Daily Bread Library.