

1 March 2012



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ -

(Before I begin the Bishop's Note this week, I want to share with my brothers and sisters of the Diocese of San Joaquin a profound sadness that I feel today upon learning of the death of my brother bishop Robinson Calvacanti of the Diocese of Recife in Brazil. Bishop Calvacanti and his wife Miriam were murdered last Sunday, February 26th in their home, apparently by their troubled son. Please join me in prayer for the Calvacanti family, the Diocese of Recife and the Anglican Communion.)

As we continue our examination of the Duties of the Laity as found in the Constitutions and Canons of the Anglican Church of North America we come to number seven:

"To receive worthily the Sacrament of Holy Communion as often as reasonable;"

As Anglican Christians we recognize and value the Grace that we receive in the sacraments. The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist are of special importance as these are the sacraments that our Lord himself commanded us to partake of... ***"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*** (Matthew 26:26-29 ESV)

The first time I received Holy Communion I was thirteen and attending worship for the first time at the invitation of a friend...who didn't show up for the service. So there I was in a strange church and listening to what the priest was saying during the celebration of Holy Communion. Having no background in Christianity (though I was baptized as a newborn in a Roman Catholic hospital by a zealous nun) and zero biblical knowledge, I began to grow increasingly uneasy as the priest said that this was the "body and blood" of Jesus - a guy I knew had died two

thousand years earlier. As it came time for communion the usher insisted that I go forward, even to the point of grabbing my elbow and "ushering" me forward to the altar rail. When I received the host, I was relieved that it was not flesh, and, when I received the chalice, I was relieved that it was not blood. Upon receiving the sacrament, I was flooded with a sense of warmth and peace like I had never experienced before. A few seconds after receiving, the celebrant returned to me, knelt down, looked me in the eyes and simply said, "Welcome Home."

The Grace that we receive in the Sacrament of Holy Communion is the Grace that comes with coming home... When our first parents, Adam & Eve, sinned and were expelled from the Garden of Eden a separation occurred between God and man, a separation that could not be rejoined by working hard and trying to be good. The fact is that no one from the moment of the fall to the moment of Jesus' resurrection - NO ONE OF THEIR OWN POWER - could earn that homecoming, could earn that reconciliation. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, his receiving the wrath of God for all of sinful man, was the only act that could reconcile God to Man and Man to God.

To worthily receive the sacrament of Holy Communion we have to accept the invitation of Christ to come to his table out of humility, love, and an abiding understanding of Christ's presence in the Sacrament. In a mystical and powerful way, Jesus is present in the bread and wine, the body and blood, and therefore when we are in the presence of the sacrament we are in the presence of the resurrected Christ, and that is an awesome understanding.

It is for this reason that we often say the prayer of humble access before receiving the sacrament: ***"We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen"***

Bishop Eric

March 3rd - Commission on Ministry
March 10th - Standing Committee
March 11th - Bishop @ San Pedro y Pablo, Arvin
March 13th - Rural Deans
March 17th - Diocesan Council and Ordination of
Jonathan Kanary @ St. Columba, Fresno, 2 p.m.
March 18th - Bishop @ St. Clement's, Woodlake
March 25th - Bishop @ St. James, Sonora
March 29th - Mass of Chrism, 11am
March 31st - Confirmations @ Epiphany, Corcoran
April 1st - Palm Sunday - Bishop at the Cathedral
April 6th - Diocesan Office Closed at noon &
Bishop at Good Friday Service @ St. James Cathedral 1-3:30 p.m.
April 8th - Easter Sunday - Bishop at the Cathedral
April 15th - Bishop @ St. John's in Stockton
April 22nd - Bishop @ Resurrection in Tracy
April 28th - Daughters of the Holy Cross Spring Gathering
April 29th - Bishop @ St. Philip's in Coalinga
April 30th - May 2nd - Clergy Conference @ ECCO
August 9-10 - Provincial Hispanic Ministry Conference. at the
Cathedral, "Caminemos Juntos"
November 2-3 - Diocesan Convention @ St. James Cathedral

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