

# THE BENEDICTINE BULLETIN Summer Fall 2021



St. Scholastica Priory, 271 North Main Street, PO Box 606, Petersham, MA 01366

It didn't take me too long to realize that some other kids (meaning non-Catholics) didn't have to go to church every Sunday. I remember hearing about kids having to go to Sunday school, which didn't tempt me to want to change my religion – not that my parents would have supported such a move. Something that balanced out this “burden” was that, since I attended a Catholic grade school, we were off the day following Halloween. Now that was almost worth it! Unfortunately my childhood homes were never close enough to other kids' houses to gloat!

The Catholic Church, like a good mother, has over the centuries attuned her practices to the children in her care at that time. I can recall my own parents telling us about the Lenten fast that was required of them. This was something I have never experienced. It was in the 1950s, and Dad had to ask permission from the pastor to be dispensed from the Lenten fast which included fasting from meat, eggs and cheese. He needed a hardy lunch to lay those bricks to feed their family of ten children.

Our family life was full of cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents coming together to celebrate the markers in our Catholic lives: baptisms and First Communions being the major gatherings. There were thirty-four grandchildren in the Kloss clan who were still too young to start the wedding circuit! For most of us growing up in the 1950-60s First Communions



were the most important days, especially if you were a girl. Yes, even at that young age, the dress and veil were pretty exciting! My teachers and parents deserve the credit that I did know the day was much more than dressing up. But we were taught about the Eucharist, Jesus' presence and his coming into our hearts - along with group synchronized genu-

flections coordinated by a little clicker that Sister had in her pocket. We even practiced taking an unconsecrated host into our mouths. Our teacher did not want us to be distracted or worried about anything on our big day!

All the nuns here at St Scholastica Priory have memories of their First Communions but not everyone has pictures. We've included those photos we were able to come up with. They are so sweet!

This time of Covid has put a pause on Catholic parish life throughout the whole world. That regular weekly attendance at a Saturday evening or Sunday morning Mass had to be stopped until things were safer. And now, finally, we can all re-enter that rhythm of this part of our human life – the part that unites us with God – the origin of our creation and the destiny of our beings in eternal life!

In 1910 Pope St Pius X issued a decree, *Quam Singulari*, that changed the Catholic practice of receiving Holy Communion and still holds in our own day. In this decree he wrote, “The Catholic Church ... took care even from the beginning to bring the little ones to Christ through Eucharistic Communion, which was administered even to nursing infants. This, as was prescribed in almost all ancient Ritual books, was done at Baptism until the thirteenth century.... It is still found in the Greek and Oriental Churches.” History tells the story that a sense of our unworthiness, mixed with awe of the Blessed Sacra-

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ment, caused the reception of Holy Communion to be infrequent, if not rare, among Catholics, including in houses of religious. How could we ever be worthy to receive this inestimable gift of God? We can't and aren't! But this knowledge of our unworthiness grew to such an extent that in 1215 during the Council of the Lateran, a law was instituted that said: you must go to confession and receive Communion *at least* once a year during Paschal Time (Canon 920). You may have heard this called our "Easter Duty." In 1545, the Council of Trent recalled another very important reason for our need to receive the Eucharist – as "[a]n antidote whereby we may be freed from daily faults and be preserved from mortal sins." We need this Bread from Heaven to make it home to the Lord, to have the strength to fight and to endure.

And so, I reflect on where we are now after more than a year of living in very difficult and special circumstances: most attending Mass virtually, receiving the Eucharist only spiritually and being apart from all that flows out of one's parish to one's home and life. We can't just hit the restart button like we can on a computer. Most likely that isn't going to work. We might have become used to sitting in our home with a televised Mass, just like me when I was little, wondering why we can't be like that infamous "everybody else!"

We might need to be reminded of what the Eucharist is. Or better to say, "WHO" the Eucharist is. The Church didn't make this up. We have the answer from God himself: "Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.... I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me

will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty'" (Jn 6:32-33, 35). Just in case we might think this is just a kind of a commemorative moment, Jesus goes on, "I am the bread of life.... This is the bread that comes down from heaven.... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (cf. Jn 6:48 ff.).

This is mind-boggling and soul-stunning, when we actually read what Jesus said. But then the question arises – Why? Why would the Lord do this? Was it simply to give the people energy: "If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance" (Mk 8:3). Yes, he does want to ensure that we do make it to our heavenly home with him. This is Jesus' desire!

But there is more. Jesus longed to celebrate that last Passover meal with his apostles. "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Lk 22:15). That very night Jesus was taken by the mob whom Judas, his own apostle, lead to the garden. All of this was in play as "He took a loaf of bread, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood'" (Lk 22:17-20).

Jesus longed to share with them not only his word, his teaching but more – his very self. To be with them - closer than "cheek to cheek." And telling them on that same night to "do this in remembrance" of him. He doesn't want us to forget him. He doesn't want us to be without him. Jesus tells them and us, "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you" (Jn 14:18). He had not even left yet and he was assuring us that he would be coming to us!

THIS is what the Eucharist is! It is Jesus coming to us! Waiting for us!

Longing for us to come and spend that time with him! I don't think there is any exaggeration in saying that Jesus couldn't wait to be with us until we entered into heaven ourselves. He is the Lover who loves us first! He is the Lover who supplies what we need to love him, a Lover carrying the antidote for all that harms us. He is the Lover who is doing all he can to help us share eternity with him by being, even now, our bit of heaven on the journey. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). He is waiting for us! Let's go!  
MMEK



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How many are they that say: How I should have wished to see his fair form, his figure, his clothes, his shoes! Why here you see him, you touch him, you eat him, and while you are longing to his his clothes, he gives you himself. Not only look at, but to touch, and to eat, and to receive within you  
St John Chrysostom

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## Some Firsts & Thoughts

The Eucharist is our life. It is the Soul, Body, Blood and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through the sacrifice of Christ that we are able to live for Him. He is the source of eternal life.

If we turn to Jesus in our needs He will fill us with His unconditional and merciful love. He knows our needs and gives us the grace to endure them for the love of Him.

Even though I am a Nun for over 25 years I am still learning about the spiritual life. This takes a lifetime to get to know the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit—The Blessed Trinity.

We are privileged to be able to receive the Holy Eucharist every day. We feel blessed that we were able to continue to do this. There were a lot of people out there who had to find other ways to watch Holy Mass and receive Jesus through spiritual communions. We pray for all of you and hope one day to meet some of you in Heaven. You are our spiritual children that God loves more than we do. *SMCB*

It was World Youth Day in Toronto 2002, and our group was in the middle of a huge crowd. While waiting for Pope John Paul II to arrive the following day, pilgrims busied themselves with various activities: musicians, lecturers, and art exhibitions. In the midst of all the bustle was the chapel for Eucharistic Adoration, solidly standing as if at the eye of a storm.

"We have an hour before lunch," one of our companions said. So we decided to make our way to the church. We were having a hard time finding it amidst the multitude, but suddenly we began to see people running and darting toward a building. "That must be it!" another said. Holding hands to stay together, we found our way to the door.

On entering, we saw the most incredible sight: hundreds of young people in a dimly lit room surrounding the Blessed Sacrament. A shrine of candles was at the center of the space, with a giant monstrance positioned at the top. People were singing, crying, pros-



trating in prayer. It was perfectly ordered chaos--an external cacophony united around a single, spiritual purpose. It was the raw and unhindered love of youth--a radical love of the Savior of mankind.

"This feels like a microcosmic reflection of the universe," someone said. "At the center of all life and all activity, the Creator stands in silence and power, upholding everything in being. Some are called to active ministry, others to direct and unceasing praise... All to reveal his glory!" *SEW*

I was in my late teens. It was a hot humid day in the middle of the summer. I had been walking for quite a while along 5th Avenue and figured I could take a rest at St. Patrick's Cathedral for some prayer and respite from the heat. All of a sudden a torrent of rain fell with the swiftness that is so common on a summer day. I quickly ducked into St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church just a few blocks away from St. Patrick's Cathedral. I thought to myself, "I'll take refuge here, wait for the rain to stop, and pray." It was a very strange experience. There was no one else in the church and I sat attempting to recollect myself. I felt uneasy and somehow estranged. It felt empty, quite like that feeling I get on Good Friday when the church is stripped. But this was different because the church was beautifully adorned and looked much like any other church during Ordinary Time. "What is this emptiness?" I asked. I remained there in my uncomfortableness, and then it dawned on me. I was in an Episcopal church not a Catholic church—it was missing the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. That was one of the first vivid recollections I have of the progression of faith from a childhood belief to a more mature faith. It wasn't that I didn't believe in the True Presence before that, but rather that this experience concretized my faith. I knew then that the source of the peace and sense of homecoming that I, almost imperceptibly, felt in Catholic churches was Jesus truly present in the Blessed Sacrament.

Fast forward about ten years later and I found myself again heading to midtown, this time to St. Francis church on 33rd Street and 7th Avenue. It was mid-week,

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after a long day of teaching in East Harlem. I remember feeling bogged down. Asking Jesus—how can I possibly do what you are asking of me? How can I live the message of the gospel in the midst of all of this? I was tired of the fight, the battle for Christ. His message was clear: go to Mass. I had discovered that the Church of St. Francis of Assisi had a late afternoon daily Mass I could make after work. It made the day a little longer because I would not make it back to the Bronx until 6:30pm, but I found that if I went to the Eucharistic celebration during the week and not just on Sunday I had the strength to deal with the challenges that came, to do battle for Christ the King. I was a better teacher, a better human, more patient, more loving, and more able to live the Christian principles. Jesus told us, "I will be with you always" (Mt 28:20) and he is with us in the tabernacle. Every time we receive the Eucharist he clothes us with himself. I had not realized how in need I was of the Spiritual food—Jesus himself. *SMIG*

A few years before I entered I read one of Pope Francis' talks in which he called on the faithful to remember their Baptism, and to celebrate the anniversary of that day in their salvation history. I thought, why just Baptism. Why not all the sacraments that I had received. So I dug out my certificates, and wrote down the dates in my calendar and began to celebrate these most important days in little ways. To honor my First Communion I would wear a white dress to morning Mass. And spend some time in pondering the constancy of the Eucharist in my life and the moments when I moved into a greater understanding of this gift.

I remember not feeling well prepared for my First Communion. I knew it was Jesus and I wanted to feel more holy or something. But I was just me with all my littleness and unknowing. Each first communicant made a felt banner to be hung in the church. Mine was purple with a stained glass window that I painted around a holy card of Christ in the garden of olives. There was also a cut out of a chalice that I decorated with gold glass beads and a Holy



Spirit dove. And of course my name and date of First Communion.

On that day I wore a beautiful dress that had been passed down in my family for at least three generations. We all stood in line outside the church for what seemed like forever in the hot Virginia sun. The next thing I remember is, not the receiving of my first Holy Communion, but a hand on my back gently shoving me towards the kneeler. I looked back to see the father of one of my classmates. I was filled with such compunction and shame. I could not believe myself, I had just received the Body and Blood of Christ for the first time and, what do I do? But plopping myself behind right on the pew and being my usual distracted self. This is the day I had my first crisis/conversion of faith, and grace flowed abundantly. I realized that I had to straighten my act up, I could no longer be a prankster at Mass, no more using my dollar bill snatcher to snatch my dollar back out of the money basket and bring laughter to the usher (which I most certainly did do!) No more sitting in the aisle tracing my finger along the grooves carved into the side of the pew. I knew I had to start taking my faith seriously and paying attention at Mass. I am sure that many parishioners would be surprised to hear that that one, yes that one, would one day be a nun. It was about that same time that I drew a picture in my picture-journal of a nun, marking down what I was sensing - Christ was calling me even then. *SMGW*



The sisters here know how much I love food, and especially dessert, so I think God worked a minor miracle for me on my first Holy Communion day. After the Mass, my family took us to a fancy hotel for a photo shoot and dinner. As my parents took pictures of me, I felt like a real princess of the kingdom of heaven and that I might as well have owned the whole hotel. Mom and Dad encouraged me to order whatever I wanted. The restaurant was one of the nicest that I had been to at that point in my life, and I remember getting the best chocolate milk I've ever had. While sipping the delicious milk with thick chocolate-y syrup, I was thinking about how it still wasn't as great as Jesus and His new presence in my soul. I had truly eaten God Himself! This joy continued throughout the meal, and I quietly pondered if perhaps instead we could all go back to church, sit in front of the tabernacle and and just be grateful. Pray for me that I can feel like this at our Sunday meals! *SMdA*

I come to contemplate Your incomprehensibility.  
Let me pay homage to Your Presence.  
You, at repose in the tomb; You, at repose in the Tabernacle  
You, Christ  
Eucharist  
Let me approach Your mystery.

I am astonished by the depth and breadth of Your love;  
A love that holds all creation in being  
And gave itself humanity, so humanity might taste eternity.  
God on the Cross; Flesh resurrected  
You, Christ  
Eucharist  
May I love with as generous a heart!

Bread is no more flesh than human is divine.  
Yet through Your grace, God walked the earth,  
Wheat and wine are flesh and blood,  
And a spark of Your divinity is enkindled in me  
Each time Your most gracious gift is given;  
Each time Your sacrifice is on the altar, incarnate,  
Each time You, Christ  
Become Eucharist.

*SMhG*

## HAPPENINGS

May 24 – A new lawn tractor arrived and ever since if you want to find Sr Monica – listen for it's motor.

June 6 – Solemnity of Corpus Christi, we were thrilled to be able to have a procession of the Blessed Sacrament outside with any guests present being able to participate! Our Church was open for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament ending after Vespers in the evening with Benediction.

June 6- We celebrated Sr. Maria's 90th birthday a day early because the actual date was Corpus Christi. We had a Mexican meal, mariachi music in the background, balloons and even a crown of flowers!



June 10 – On returning from a trip one of the Sisters noticed that one of the cars was leaking gas, more like a flow. The mice discovered that they particularly liked the hoses and had eaten their way through the gas line.

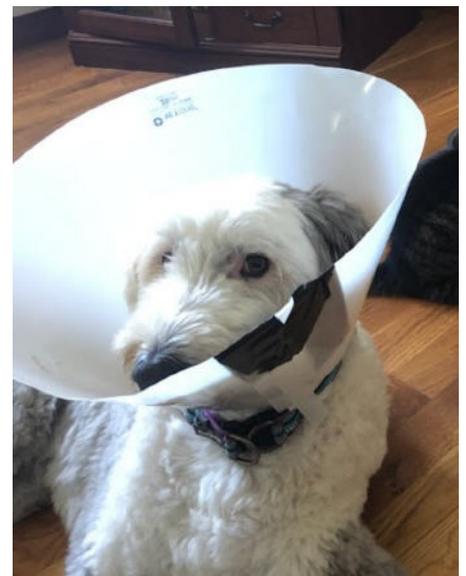


June 18 - Zoom talk with Professor Adrian Walker on The Question of Neutrality of Technology.



June 21 – We were blessed with the expertise of a friend who is teaching some of us about making soap. Chris-

tine had her own business for some years and teaches the craft at a local college.



June 25 – Chaeli came home from the vet with a cone on her head having had some surgery. Once she got used to it – watch out! She just kept pushing through a door way, or a crowd, till it gave way.

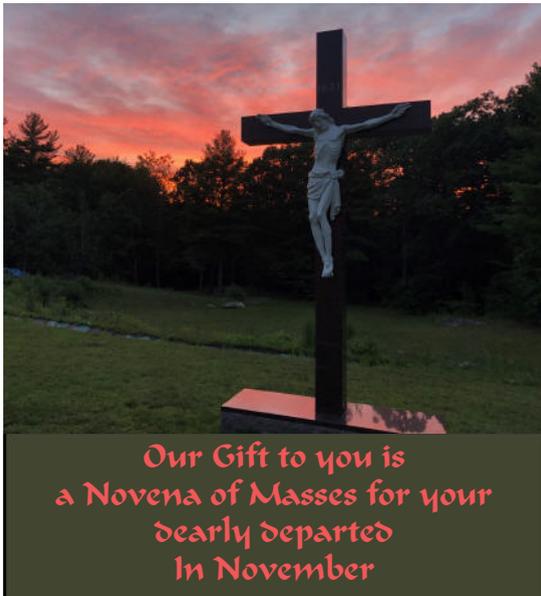
June 30 – was the first day of several to update the wifi and to rewire the generator to cover everything needed should we lose power. These men

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*Happenings continued from page 5*

were amazing in their knowledge and skill.

July 3 – We welcomed our first guest into our refectory since the lockdown April 2020. Pray we can continue!

August 12-17 Mother Mary Elizabeth went to facilitate a Visitation of Our Lady of the Desert in New Mexico. Sr Ancilla of St Walburga in Colorado was her partner. They are located in the high desert – so different from green, humid New England.

July 19- The arrival of Sasha - our new Siberian kitten.



Dear Friends,

YOU have been in our prayers even more during these strange and mysterious times. We continue to pray for the end of the virus to really come.

We realize how blessed we were to have had Mass nearly every day. There were about three weeks that we were all in isolation but that was it! Most were without the Eucharist for months and months. How deep in our souls is this Blessed Sacrament. We wanted to remind and encourage all to return to this supernal gift that is ours! One with The Lord and One with all in Him!

Check our website for the complete pictures of some our First Communicants. Also some of the articles had a paragraph or two more that couldn't fit in this letter. We also want you to see the words of St Thomas Aquinas that he wrote about the Eucharist. There is a link for you to listen to this amazing hymn.

PRAY FOR US! WE DO FOR YOU! M. Mary Elizabeth and All!

Have you wondered  
what God is calling  
you to do?

will be offered  
October 8th-10th

Check our website  
for details

