

## The teaching of the Catholic faith on the reception of the Holy Eucharist

The recent Apostolic Letter *Desiderio desideravi*, given June 29th 2022, the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul, states:

5. The world still does not know it, but everyone is *invited to the supper of the wedding of the Lamb* (Re 19:9). To be admitted to the feast all that is required is the wedding garment of faith which comes from the hearing of his Word (cf. Ro 10:17). [Il mondo ancora non lo sa, ma tutti sono *invitati al banchetto di nozze dell'Agnello* (Ap 19,9). Per accedervi occorre solo l'abito nuziale della fede che viene dall'ascolto della sua Parola (cfr. Rm 10,17)[...].

The natural meaning of these words is that the only requirement for a Catholic to worthily receive the Holy Eucharist is possession of the virtue of faith, by which one believes Christian teaching on the grounds of its being divinely revealed. Moreover, in the Apostolic Letter as a whole there is silence on this essential topic of repentance for sin for the worthy reception of the Eucharist.

This natural meaning contradicts the faith of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has always taught that in order to receive the Holy Eucharist worthily and without sin, Catholics must receive sacramental absolution, if possible, for any mortal sins they may have committed and obey all other laws of the Church concerning reception of the Eucharist (as, for example, the laws concerning fasting prior to reception of the Eucharist). However, if a Catholic is unable to confess mortal sins but has a grave reason for receiving the Eucharist (such as a priest who may be required to celebrate Mass at a given time but who is unable to go to Confession), such a person must be confident to the best of his ability that he have perfect contrition for any mortal sins that he may have committed.

The claim that faith is the only requirement for worthy reception of the Holy Eucharist was condemned by the Council of Trent as a heresy.

### The holy and ecumenical Council of Trent, Decree concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist (October 11th 1551).

#### Chapter VII. The Preparation that Must be Employed to Receive the Holy Eucharist Worthily

If it is not becoming for anyone to approach any of the sacred functions except solemnly, certainly, the more the holiness and the divinity of this heavenly sacrament is understood by a Christian, the more diligently ought he to take heed lest he approach to receive it without great reverence and holiness [can. 2], especially when we read in the Apostle those words full of terror: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself not discerning the body of the Lord" [1 Cor. 11 :29 ]. Therefore, the precept, "Let a man prove himself" [1 Cor. 11:28], must be recalled to mind by him who wishes to communicate. Now ecclesiastical usage declares that this examination is necessary, that no one conscious of mortal sin, however contrite he may seem to himself, should approach the Holy Eucharist without a previous sacramental confession. This, the holy Synod has decreed, is always to be observed by all Christians, even by those priests on whom by their office it may be incumbent to celebrate, provided the recourses of a confessor be not lacking to them. But if in an urgent necessity a priest should celebrate without previous confession, let him confess as soon as possible.

...

**Canon 11.** If anyone says that faith alone is sufficient preparation for receiving the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist, let him be anathema. [Si quis dixerit, solam

fidem esse sufficientem praeparationem ad sumendum sanctissimum eucharistiae sacramentum, anathema sit.]

This claim also contradicts Canons 915 and 916 of the Latin Code of Canon Law, and Canons 711 and 712 of the Oriental Code of Canon Law.

### Latin Code of Canon Law

**Can. 915:** Those who have been excommunicated or interdicted after the imposition or declaration of the penalty and others obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to holy communion.

**Can. 916:** A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition which includes the resolution of confessing as soon as possible.

### Oriental Code of Canon Law

**Canon 711:** A person who is conscious of serious sin is not to celebrate the Divine Liturgy nor receive the Divine Eucharist unless a serious reason is present and there is no opportunity of receiving the sacrament of penance; in this case the person should make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible.

**Canon 712:** Those who are publicly unworthy are forbidden from receiving the Divine Eucharist.

The purpose of these canons is to prevent grave sin on the part of the person unworthily receiving the Eucharist, to prevent scandal, and to prevent the desecration of the sacrament by such unworthy reception. These canons are still in force. They cannot be validly repealed, because their content expresses the divine law concerning the Eucharist that is taught in the Holy Scriptures and Sacred Tradition. This has been [pointed out](#) in the Declaration of June 24th 2000 by the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, concerning the admission to Holy Communion of faithful who are divorced and remarried:

The *Code of Canon Law* establishes that “Those upon whom the penalty of excommunication or interdict has been imposed or declared, and others who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin, are not to be admitted to Holy Communion” (can. 915). ... The prohibition found in the cited canon, by its nature, is derived from divine law and transcends the domain of positive ecclesiastical laws: the latter cannot introduce legislative changes which would oppose the doctrine of the Church. The scriptural text on which the ecclesial tradition has always relied is that of St. Paul: “This means that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A man should examine himself first only then should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself.”

Pope Francis has indicated by his words and actions that he holds the view expressed by the natural meaning of the words of *Desiderio desideravi* cited above.

In his Angelus for the feast of “Corpus Domini” on June 6, 2021, Pope Francis said:

... there is another strength that stands out in the fragility of the Eucharist: the strength to love those who make mistakes. It is *on the night he is betrayed* that Jesus gives us the Bread of Life. He gives us the greatest gift while he feels the deepest abyss in his heart: the disciple who eats with Him, who dips the morsel in the same plate, is betraying

Him. And betrayal is the worst suffering for one who loves. And what does Jesus do? He reacts to the evil with a greater good. He responds to Judas' 'no' with the 'yes' of mercy. He does not punish the sinner, but rather gives His life for him; He pays for him. When we receive the Eucharist, Jesus does the same with us: he knows us; he knows we are sinners; and he knows we make many mistakes, but he does not give up on joining his life to ours. He knows that we need it, because the Eucharist is not the reward of saints, no, it is *the Bread of sinners*. This is why he exhorts us: "Do not be afraid! *Take and eat.*"

The statement that the Eucharist is not the reward of saints but the bread of sinners might be understood in an orthodox sense if taken in isolation. However, placed in the context of the reception of the Eucharist by Judas referred to in the Angelus address (cf. John 13:23-27), and in the context of Pope Francis's other words and actions, it suggests that renunciation of sin is not necessary for one's reception of the Eucharist to be acceptable to God. This view is borne out in the following statement from *Desiderio desideravi*: 'Indeed, every reception of communion of the Body and Blood of Christ was already desired by him in the Last Supper' (n. 6).

The teaching of the Council of Trent cited above condemns the position of Martin Luther on faith and justification. Pope Francis has publicly expressed his agreement with the condemned positions of Luther. In an in-flight press conference on June 26th, 2016, Pope Francis stated:

I think that Martin Luther's intentions were not mistaken; he was a reformer. Perhaps some of his methods were not right, although at that time, if you read Pastor's history, for example - Pastor was a German Lutheran who experienced a conversion when he studied the facts of that period; he became a Catholic - we see that the Church was not exactly a model to emulate. There was corruption and worldliness in the Church; there was attachment to money and power. That was the basis of his protest. He was also intelligent, and he went ahead, justifying his reasons for it. Nowadays, Lutherans and Catholics, and all Protestants, are in agreement on the doctrine of justification: on this very important point he was not mistaken.

On the day that *Desiderio desideravi* was issued, Pope Francis received in audience Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Nancy Pelosi has been publicly forbidden to receive communion under Canon 915 by her ordinary, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone. The grounds for this measure were her consistent political support for the complete legalization of abortion up to birth. After the audience with Pope Francis, Nancy Pelosi received communion at a mass in St. Peter's over which Pope Francis presided, causing scandal to Catholics over all the world. When asked about her illegal reception of communion, Pope Francis expressed no disapproval of it. Instead, he responded by saying 'When the Church loses its pastoral nature, when a bishop loses his pastoral nature, it causes a political problem. That's all I can say.' This response rebukes Archbishop Cordileone for his justified application of Canon 915.

The Apostolic Letter *Desiderio desideravi* is not an infallible teaching, because it does not satisfy the necessary conditions for an exercise of papal infallibility. The canon of the Council of Trent is an exercise of the infallible teaching authority of the Church. Therefore, the contradiction between *Desiderio desideravi* and the defined doctrine of the Council of Trent does not falsify the claim of the Catholic Church to be infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit when by an exercise of her teaching office she requires all Catholics to believe a doctrine as being divinely revealed. On the possibility of a pope publicly teaching error, see the *Correctio filialis* addressed to Pope Francis by a number of Catholic scholars (<http://www.correctiofilialis.org>), and the discussions in the book *Defending the Faith against Present Heresies* (Arouca Press,

2021). No Catholic can believe or act upon a papal pronouncement if it contradicts the divinely revealed Catholic faith.

We, the undersigned, confess the Catholic faith concerning the worthy reception of the Eucharist as it is defined by the Council of Trent, according to which faith alone is not a sufficient preparation for receiving the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist. We encourage all the bishops and clerics of the Catholic Church to publicly confess the same doctrine about the worthy reception of the Eucharist, and enforce the related canons in order to avoid grave and public scandal.

[Signed.]

*Please see here the list of first signatories. Scholars and clergymen are invited to contact us should they wish to sign this document: [mhickson@lifesitenews.com](mailto:mhickson@lifesitenews.com)*

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