

First Holy Communion

May 16, 2010

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1ST READING: ACTS 1: 1-11

They said, "Men of Galilee why are you standing there looking at the sky?"

PSALM 118

2ND READING: EPHESIANS 1: 17-23

Brothers and sisters: may the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him.

GOSPEL: LUKE 24:46-53

Then he led them as far as Bethany and raised his hands and blessed them and as he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven.

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What a glorious day! Today 103 children will receive the Body and Blood of Christ our Savior for the first time. They have been learning about God all year and teachers think they have come a long way. **At the start when one of the teachers told the children that God made everything and one of the boys was quick to blurt out, "So, you mean to say that God lives in China?"**

This is a good time to thank our teachers and especially our formation leaders, Mrs. Lisa McQuagge and Sr. Bea please stand. [applause] And now, we would like all the parents to stand. And also, all the Godparents, when your children were baptized, you promised that they would receive their religious instructions and the First Communion. Thank you for your integrity. [applause] I pray you have personally benefited from the adult portion of this program.

Now, the children know what is about to happen. **There are certain days that we call "liminal"—meaning these special days are like doorways. We walk through the door and our lives are changed.** The day we are born is a doorway into this life. Our baptism is a doorway into Christian faith. We have other doorways: Confirmation, Ordination or Wedding days are some big ones. But today, we celebrate First Communion, the doorway into the Sacred. ***This is more than just growing from the "high chair" to the big table.***

Jesus is the love of God personified. Everywhere he went his love helped people. He told people that when we live in his love **we don't have to be afraid.**

Why worry if you can pray? Then when the hands that threw the stars into the galaxy were nailed to a cross, he forgave our sins. But it didn't end there it continues even today. He continues to take on the forgiveness of sins and reassure us of his love by giving himself to us. His precious body and blood become one with our precious body and blood when we receive this Holy Communion. Isn't it amazing? Isn't it wonderful? This is so spectacularly intimate that not everyone can believe it; and so totally awesome no mere human could have thought this up! If this host or wafer tasted like a cookie or a piece of candy, we wouldn't make the connection to his suffering. If it tasted bitter we couldn't make the connection to his love. It is tasteless for a good reason. ***It is our faith that gives it flavor.*** Jesus gives himself to us. When you believe in this miracle you find this consecrated wafer giving you strength to cope with life and death. Good things and bad things happen to every one of us, but with this Body and Blood in us, we can deal with all of it.

These children have been enlightened by Christ; they are to walk always as children of the light. But they will have to face the world with all its temptations. Parent's this light; this liminal moment is yours as well as your child's. We are filling them up with promise of a bright future. They have been baptized and now they are receiving their First Communion. Today they will leave filled with the love of Christ. ***It may be like air, you can't see it but I can blow up this balloon so you can imagine the love of Christ within us.*** We have given the children this air so to speak. ***But if it stops here, they will experience the same struggles in the same way as the disadvantaged who haven't stepped through this doorway into the sacred which we call Eucharist. Then they will be running around like so many in our world desperately looking for love in all the wrong places.*** *[let go of the balloon; let it fly up and crash down]* They may seem to fly high for awhile, but ultimately they will crash.

In just a few moments we will all say: *"Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and my soul will be healed."* Jesus does it every time. He heals our souls when we ask. So we will receive him and like the air in the

balloon, he will expand our hearts. He will expand our lives. **He will carry us over the threshold into everlasting life.** That is Good News!!

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