

There's good news and bad news for the children making first communion today. The good news is the day has finally arrived. You will be one with Jesus, and one with us. The bad news is there's no such thing as a free lunch. Rights have responsibilities. At home if you eat at the table, you may also have to set the table or clear the table.

The same is true at communion. Rights have responsibilities.

There are people who do not come to communion. And this is as sad for us as it is at home when someone is missing from your dinner. Some are not Catholics; they may be visitors here. Some are catechumens and candidates; they are people who are preparing to join the Catholic Church but aren't ready for Eucharist yet. Some are Catholics who think they're not worthy for communion. We do all that we can to help them overcome those feelings or to live in peace with us. And some who don't come to communion are children, children preparing for first communion.

Those who come to communion are members of our family. They have a right to communion, but they also have responsibilities. If communion is a sign of our unity, we who share communion have a responsibility to build up our community. Not just the community of the Church, but of the world.

I spoke last night with a bondsman I know. Bondsmen are people who help you post bail for criminals. If you're looking for job security in the Kansas City area, priest and bondsman are two jobs you might think about. Crime is up; the murder rate is up; drug use is up. What that tells me about our community is that we're losing our value of life. We please ourselves before we please our neighbor, indeed at the expense of our neighbor. When life brings us pain we run away from it, rather than deal with it. If we are to stop crime in our city we must first stop it here in our hearts. Every selfish thought of ours creates a home for crime.

Jesus prayed for unity. In his final words at the Last Supper he prayed that we would be one, one with him, one with the Father. We express that unity most perfectly in communion. We receive communion together. We sing the hymns together. We give thanks together. We are dismissed from church together.

There is no free lunch. Jesus calls us from this communion to build unity for the world.

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