



# Blessed Are They Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

In these times of social distancing and closed churches, we may be tempted to feel disconnected from one another. Streaming Mass and Adoration on TV certainly doesn't evoke the same sense of the Holy as being present in the church among other believers. While we grieve the opportunity to worship under one roof, we are united, at least, in our hunger for the Eucharist.

It may come as a surprise to learn that before the 20th century, frequent reception of the Eucharist was not the norm. In fact, the precept of the Church addressing reception of Communion decrees that the faithful receive the Eucharist at least once a year, preferably during Easter. For most of us, it wasn't long ago when we could find multiple daily Masses around us, granting ease of access to our Eucharistic Lord at whatever time was most convenient. Yet, for an enormous portion of the world, the opportunity to receive the Body and Blood of Christ comes rarely. Their priests describe these faithful as approaching the altar on their knees, weep-

ing in homage and gratitude for this Sacrament of salvation. Their intense hunger for Christ serves as a reminder to us of the privilege of frequent reception. May the hunger we feel now serve to unite us in love with our Christian brethren throughout the world.

Maintaining a fittingly reverent adoration of the Eucharist may become difficult as it becomes a common, expected part of our daily or weekend ritual. Suddenly we are prompted to the reality that we are not entitled to the Holy Mass or the Eucharist. May this time of church closures awaken a deeper love for the Eucharist and sacredness of the Holy Mass. May we view this time as a supremely unique opportunity to grow in Spiritual communion with Christ rather than merely obligatory deprivation.

The health circumstances of our global climate may have paused the public distribution of the Eucharist, but Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) invites us to see this as an act of reverence. In Behold the Pierced

One he writes about fasting from the Eucharist. There are times when it is "impossible to provide a dignified distribution of the sacrament; in such cases, the renunciation of the sacrament could, in fact, express more reverence and love than a reception which does not do justice to the significance of what is taking place." He continues, "A fasting of this kind—and of course, it would have to be open to the Church's guidance and not arbitrary—could lead to a deepening of personal relationship with the Lord in the sacrament. It could also be an act of solidarity with all those who yearn for the sacrament but cannot receive it." What a valuable understanding to apply to our times.

While we eagerly await our reunion with the Eucharistic Lord, "we must prepare ourselves for so great and so holy a moment" (CCC 1385) so that when the time arrives, we may greet Jesus with the gladness that Mary felt as she ran to embrace her resurrected son.