

*Mother of God Catholic Church
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Dearest sisters and brothers in Christ,

As these days of ubiquitous uncertainty continue to unfold before us, there is a great hunger within and among us: A hunger for connectedness, a hunger for consolation. There is indeed **a great spiritual hunger** among us in these frightening and disorienting times. We witness physical hunger, the kind of suffering that hits one in the gut. Facing the precariousness of poverty fills the pit of stomach with waves of panic, discomfort and suffering that challenges us in countless ways. Our families, neighbors, friends and our family of faith experience unemployment, being homeless or dependent on the blessings of others, and many among us are experiencing food insecurity, often for the first time. The suffering is visceral.

Many can't help but feel the suffering and **hunger** for stability as we walk among our neighbors and in our community. People are yearning, searching for connectedness, for example, in live streamed masses and online prayer groups. How can we access this feeling of heartfelt security amidst the suffering all around us during these days of radical uncertainty?

Jesus reveals a way of being that is embraced by the certainty of our faith. He is the breath of miracles! He gave us the **Eucharist to comfort and feed our souls and our hearts. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Catholic faith**, but the miracle is not just in the bread. The miracle is also in the transformation, in the love and service that we share with the world. The miracle is in our generosity, in our gifts and blessings passed along to others. It is in the donations we give to our parish. It is in every volunteer that works to make sure food banks do not close their doors. It is in the dedication of our neighbors who care for the sick and those too isolated to reach out. The miracle of our faith lives in our friends and families when we come together virtually to pray and to break bread. We slow down, quiet ourselves, and get to know God again.

Let us pray that we may come to know our precious Lord well, be it through **the sacrament of the Eucharist**, or in these days of necessary social care, in our fervent prayers. When we quiet the noise of the world, we recognize that Jesus is our guide, our comfort and our refuge. He welcomed the stranger; he healed the sick; he offered mercy and forgiveness. His friends, his disciples, followed him. During the Eucharist celebration, we are reminded that Jesus broke bread and ate it with everyone who came to be in His presence. He ate with the homeless, with suffering women and children, with sinners, with those others overlooked. In **the sacrament of the Eucharist** we are welcomed to the table. In our prayers, we are welcomed to His eternal love.

Let us pray and imagine the possibility of a world characterized by love and mercy, and may we commit ourselves to living this way. May we go forth in peace to love and serve the Lord. Let us pray and write upon our hearts the miracle and promise of our Lord: "***Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.***" (*Hebrews 13-5*).

In Christ,

Fr. Vincent Phung

From a treatise against Fabianus by Saint Fulgentius of Ruspe, bishop

(Cap. 28, 1619: CCL 91 A, 813-814)

We are made holy by our sharing in Christ's body and blood

In our offering of the holy sacrifice we fulfill the command of our Savior, as recorded by the apostle Paul: *The Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and after he had given thanks, broke it and said: This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. The same way, after the supper, he took the cup saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you shall proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.*

This sacrifice is offered, then, to proclaim the Lord's death; it is offered in remembrance of him who laid down his life for our sake. As he says: *Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends.* Because Christ died for us out of love, we ask, when we make remembrance of his death at the time of sacrifice, that we too may be granted love through the coming of the Holy Spirit. We pray that by the love which Christ had for us when he braved the cross, we may receive the grace of the Spirit and be crucified to the world, and the world to us. *The death Christ died, he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God.* Let us imitate our Lord's death, and also *live a new life.* Strengthened with the gift of his love, let us die to sin and live for God.

For God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. Indeed our sharing in the Lord's body and blood when we eat his bread and drink his cup teaches us that we should die to the world, and that we should keep our *life hidden with Christ in God, crucifying our flesh with its vices and evil desires.*

That is why all the faithful who love God and their neighbor truly drink the cup of the Lord's love even though they may not drink the cup of his bodily suffering. And becoming inebriated from it, they put to death whatever in their nature is rooted in earth. They clothe themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not indulge fleshly desires. They do not fix their gaze on visible things, but contemplate things which the eye cannot see. Thus they drink the Lord's cup by preserving the holy bond of love; without it, even if a man should deliver *his body to be burned*, he gains nothing. But the gift of love enables us to become in reality what we celebrate as mystery in the sacrifice.