

Rethinking Communion in the Hand

By Jude A Huntz

HOMELITIC & PASTORAL REVIEW, March 1997

Has the practice of Communion in the hand really strengthened and clarified our faith in the Real Presence?

The time has come to begin to do everything we reasonably and licitly can to discourage the practice of Communion-in-the-Hand. In fact, the time is long past that we started doing this. It is much better to receive Holy Communion in the traditional manner, than it is to receive the Sacred Host into our hands. In Canada and the United States, it is true that one may receive “on the hand,” with due precautions, but it is better to receive on the tongue.

Even as we begin, it might immediately be objected: Communion in the hand is fully approved by the Church, and it is disloyal and disrespectful and therefore not allowed even to begin this discussion. In answer to that objection, let us begin with the legal aspects of the question.

1. The legal status of the two methods

It is the law of the universal Church in the Latin Rite (to which most of us belong) that we receive Communion in the traditional manner. To receive on the hand is only an “indult,” or concession that is in effect here and there. It does not exist in the greater part of the world. For example, for a while it was allowed in the Philippines, but then the bishops there changed their minds, and rescinded the permission.

Another way of illustrating this same point is to recall that in those countries where the indult for Communion in the hand has been granted by the Holy See, an individual bishop may forbid the practice. But, no bishop has the authority to forbid the traditional way of receiving Communion: on the tongue. Thus from the point of view of liturgical law, the two are very far from equal.

It must be further noted that the relevant legislation “strongly urges and exhorts” us all to receive Communion in the traditional manner, which is officially described as “more reverent.” One will search in vain for any encouragement of Communion in the hand on the part of the supreme authority of the Church. Indeed, the only time that it is mentioned in official documents is in a cautionary way. It can be done reverently, but be careful!

In some countries the practice of receiving Communion in the hand has been introduced. This practice has been requested by individual episcopal conferences and has received approval from the Apostolic See. However, cases of a deplorable lack of respect towards the Eucharistic species have been reported, cases which are imputable not only to the individuals guilty of such behavior but also to the pastors of the church who have not been vigilant enough regarding the attitude of the faithful towards the Eucharist. It also happens, on occasion, that the free choice of those who prefer to continue the practice of receiving the Eucharist on the tongue is not taken into account in those places where the distribution of Communion in the hand has been authorized. It is therefore difficult in the context of this present letter not to mention the sad phenomena previously referred to. This is in no way meant to refer to those who, receiving the Lord Jesus in the hand, do so with profound reverence and devotion, in those countries where this practice has been authorized. (Pope John Paul II, *Dominicae Cenae*, II)

In *Memoriale Domini*, which granted the original concession, and in the letter to nuncios which in each and every case accompanied the actual indult (*L'instruction “Memoriale Domini”*), the permission for Communion in the hand was hedged around with so many precautions, that some have concluded that even in countries where it would seem to be legal, actually, in the larger number of cases, it is still not allowed.

2. The fragments . . .

If we examine the practice of placing the Sacred Host in the hand of the communicant, one dogma of the Church comes immediately to mind:

The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ. [Note 205: Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1641.] (CCC, 1377, my emphasis).

The Roman Catechism put it this way:

Christ, whole and entire, is contained not only under either species, but also in each particle of either species. Each, says St. Augustine, receives Christ the Lord, and He is entire in each portion. He is not diminished by being given to many, but gives Himself whole and entire to each . . . the body of our Lord is contained whole and entire under the least particle of the bread.

Therefore, very great reverence, respect and care is to be taken of these fragments. Since this is the case, why would we multiply immensely the number of persons who are handling the Sacred Host, some of whom are clumsy, or cannot see well, or don't care, or don't know, etc.

To this must be added the increased danger of dropping the Host on the ground and the increased ease of stealing the Body of the Lord for superstitious or horrible purposes.

For those who believe with lively faith, this question ought to be enough to put an end to Communion in the hand: "What about the fragments?"

3. Clericalism?

Is it not a form of clericalism to allow the priest to touch the Sacred Host and to disallow the laity to do the same? But priests are not allowed to touch the Blessed Sacrament except out of necessity. In fact, other than the celebrant of the Mass itself, no one else who is receiving Communion, not even a priest, may do so in the hand. And so, in the traditional liturgical practice of the Roman Rite, if a priest assists at Mass (and is not [con]celebrating) and if he wishes to receive Holy Communion, he does not do so by his own hand: he receives on the tongue from another priest. The same is true of a bishop. The same is true of the Pope himself.

When Pope St. Pius X, for example, was on his death bed in August of 1914, and Holy Communion was brought to him as Viaticum, he did not and was not allowed to receive in the hand: he received on the tongue according to the law and practice of the Catholic Church.

This confirms a basic point: out of reverence, there should be no unnecessary touching of the Sacred Host. Obviously someone is needed to distribute the Bread of Life. But it is not necessary to make each man, woman and child into his own "eucharistic minister" and multiply the handling and fumbling and danger of dropping and loss of fragments. Even those whose hands have been specially consecrated to touch the Most Holy Eucharist, namely the priests, should not do so needlessly.

4. "Communion in the hand" is a misnomer

To place the Sacred Host in the hand of a person is not to give him Holy Communion. The Sacrament of Holy Communion consists in the eating of the Bread of Life. Rather, what is happening here is that each person who receives the Sacred Host in his hand, is then giving himself Holy Communion. Each person is becoming his own (extraordinary-become-ordinary) minister of Communion. By this means the ministry of priests (and deacons) or even that of legitimate extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion is becoming obscured or even dissolved.

5. Some Scriptural considerations . . .

In Holy Communion, we receive the Word-made-Flesh. When Ezekiel received the word of God, in a wonderful yet lesser manner than do we, it was as follows:

And [the Lord] said to me: . . . "But you, son of man, hear what I say to you; be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth, and eat what I give you." And when I looked, behold, a hand

was stretched out to me, and, lo, a written scroll was in it . . . And He said to me, “Son of man, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and He gave me the scroll to eat [”And I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that book”—Vulgate]. And he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. (Ezek. 2:1,8,9; 3:1-3, RSV).

It does not say that the prophet stretched out his hand, but that he opened his mouth. And is this not very fitting, since we are to receive the word as little children, whether it be the bread of doctrine or the Bread come down from Heaven.

In another place, in a psalm with clear prophetic, Eucharistic overtones, which is used in the Office of Corpus Christi, the Lord says to us, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you from the land of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it But Israel I would feed with finest wheat and fill them with honey from the rock.” “I will fill it,” not “fill it yourselves.”

Now admittedly, this is not in itself a proof. But it points us in a certain direction.

Again, it is certainly eminently scriptural to refrain from touching something as a sign of reverence (and not only scriptural, but even universally human). In the case of the Ark of the Covenant, it was absolutely forbidden to touch it, under pain of death. Even when it was “necessary” to do so, as it seemed to one unfortunate ark-bearer, it was still forbidden. And the fellow paid the supreme price for his temerity in reaching out to steady the ark: “When they came to the floor of Machon, Oza put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it because the oxen kicked and made it lean aside. And the indignation of the Lord was enkindled against Oza, and He struck him for his rashness and he died there before the ark of God” (II Sam. 6:6,7). We have greater than the Ark of the Covenant here.

6. The Last Supper

But surely the apostles received Communion in the hand at the last supper? It is usually presumed that this was so. Even if it were, though, we would point out that the apostles were themselves priests, or even, bishops.

But we must not forget a traditional practice of middle-eastern hospitality, which was practiced in Jesus’ time and which is still the case: one feeds one’s guests with one’s own hand, placing a symbolic morsel in the mouth of the guest. And we have scriptural evidence of this as well: our Lord dipped a morsel of bread into some wine, and gave it to Judas. Did he place this wet morsel into Judas’s hand? That would be rather messy. Did he not perhaps extend to the one whom he addressed later in the garden as “Friend” the gesture of hospitality spoken of above? And if so, why not with Holy Communion, “giving himself by his own hand.”

7. Take and eat . . .

Did not our Lord say of Holy Communion, “Take and eat”? Yes, but these words were addressed to the apostles and not to all Christians indiscriminately. Further, even if these words had been addressed to all the faithful, they are not verified in our standardized way of receiving Holy Communion. Literalism here would require that the priest or other minister merely hold the ciborium while the faithful “took” and ate. But this practice is forbidden. (It has been practiced here and there in violation of liturgical law.)

8. The provenance of Communion in the hand

The origin of the current practice of Communion in the hand in Western Christianity can be traced to the Protestant Revolution, or “Reformation.” Some will argue that this was the reintroduction of a formerly universal and venerable practice. We will deal with that idea below. But even if it were the case that this was formerly a practice in the Catholic Church, its introduction in the sixteenth century was hardly orthodox. Rather, it was an embodiment of a denial of the Real Presence as taught by Christ and his Church, and of the reality of the Catholic priesthood. It was a liturgical consequence of a prior heresy.

It is well known that Communion in the hand began spreading during the early nineteen-sixties, in Catholic circles in Holland. It began, then, as an aping of the Protestant practice, or at the very least as a “false archaeologism”: an idolization of (supposed) practices of the ancient Church. This involved a

forgetfulness (or denial!) of the truth and development of Catholic Eucharistic doctrine to an ever clearer, and ever more explicit form. It involved a rejection of what had in fact been handed down to us in the organic development of the Liturgy. And it was a case of blatant defiance and disobedience of Church law and ecclesiastical authority.

The desire for this practice proceeded neither from the supreme authority of the Church, which was opposed to it, nor from the ranks of Christ's faithful (who by definition hold fast to belief in transubstantiation) who never asked for this practice. Rather it proceeded from some of the middle management of the Church, and the "liturgical establishment" in particular. And this in typical revolutionary fashion.

When it came time to begin pressure for the practice in North America, the means used were not always honest. In fact a measure of deception or at least "mis-information" was involved. It is better to draw a cloak over the sordid details, but if anyone wants to dispute that things were this way, ample documentation can be brought to bear.

We can summarize that the practice of Communion in the hand came in modern times from heresy and disobedience. Is that what the Holy Spirit would inspire to bring about some desired liturgical change? One is permitted to think that perhaps a different spirit was at work.

9. Was it universal?

The history of Communion in the hand is usually told as follows: From the Last Supper on, and during the time of the apostles, Holy Communion was, of course, given in the hand. So it was during the age of the martyrs. And it continued to be so during that golden age of the Fathers and of the liturgy, after the peace of Constantine. Communion in the hand was given to the faithful just as we now do (in the more open and up-to-date sectors of the Church). And it continued to be the common practice until at least the tenth century. Thus for over half of the life of the Church, it was the norm.

A wonderful proof of the above is held to be found in a text of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386) in which he counsels the faithful to "make a throne of your hands in which to receive the King [in Holy Communion]." This Father of the Church further counsels great care for any fragments which might remain in one's hands, since just as one wouldn't let gold dust fall to the ground so one should take even greater care when it is a question of the Body of the Lord.

According to the popular rendition, the change in the manner of receiving the consecrated bread came about in this way: During the Middle Ages, there were certain distortions in the faith, and/or in the approach to the faith, which took place and which gradually developed. These include an excessive fear of God and related preoccupation with sin, judgment and punishment; an overemphasis on the divinity of Christ which was virtually a denial of or at least downplaying of his sacred humanity; an overemphasis on the role of the priest in the sacred liturgy; and a loss of the sense of the community which the Church, in fact, is.

In particular, because of excessive emphasis on adoration of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and a too strict approach to moral matters, Holy Communion became more and more rare. It was considered sufficient to gaze upon the Sacred Host during the elevation. (In fact, this decadent practice of the "elevation"—so the mainstream treatment of this period continues—and the equally unhealthy Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament find their origins during these unfortunate Middle Ages, a period whose liturgical practices we would do well to rid ourselves of).

It was in this atmosphere and under these circumstances that the practice of Communion in the hand began to be restricted. The practice of the priest placing the consecrated bread directly into the mouth of the communicant developed and—sad to say—was imposed.

The conclusion is rather clear: we should get rid of this custom whose roots are to be found in the dark ages. We should forbid or at least discourage this practice of not allowing the faithful to "take and eat," and return to the pristine usage of the Fathers and of the apostles: Communion in the hand.

It is a compelling story. It is too bad that it is not true.

The Sacred Council of Trent declared that the custom of only the priest who is celebrating the Mass giving Communion to himself (with his own hands), and the laity receiving it from him, is an Apostolic Tradition.¹

A more rigorous study of the available evidence from Church History and from the writings of the Fathers does not support the assertion that Communion in the hand was a universal practice which was gradually supplanted and eventually replaced by the practice of Communion on the tongue.

Rather, the facts seem to point to a different conclusion.

Pope St. Leo the Great (440-461), already in the fifth century, is an early witness of the traditional practice. In his comments on the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, he speaks of Communion in the mouth as the current usage: "One receives in the mouth what one believes by faith."² The Pope does not speak as if he were introducing a novelty, but as if this were a well-established fact.

A century and a half later, but still three centuries before the practice (according to the popular account reviewed above) was supposedly introduced, Pope St. Gregory the Great (590-604) is another witness. In his dialogues (Roman 3, c. 3) he relates how Pope St. Agapito performed a miracle during the Mass, after having placed the Body of the Lord into someone's mouth. We are also told by John the Deacon of this Pope's manner of giving Holy Communion.

These witnesses are from the fifth and the sixth centuries. How can one reasonably say that Communion in the hand continued as the official practice until the tenth century? How can one claim that giving Communion on the tongue is a medieval invention?

We are not claiming that under no circumstances whatever did the faithful receive by their own hands. But, under what conditions did this happen? It does seem that from very early on it was usual for the priest to place the Sacred Host into the mouth of the communicant. However, during times of persecution, when priests were not readily available, and when the faithful took the Sacrament to their homes, they gave Communion to themselves, by their own hand. In other words, rather than be totally deprived of the Bread of Life, they could receive by their own hand, when not to do so would mean being deprived of that necessary spiritual nourishment. The same applied to monks who had gone out into the desert where they would not have the services of a priest, and would not want to give up the practice of daily Communion.

To summarize, the practice was that one could touch the Host when not to do so would mean being deprived of the Sacrament. But when a priest was available, one did not receive in one's hand.

So St. Basil (330-379) says clearly that to receive Communion by one's own hand is only permitted in times of persecution or, as was the case with monks in the desert, when no deacon or priest was available to give it. "It is not necessary to show that it does not constitute a grave fault for a person to communicate with his own hand in a time of persecution when there is no priest or deacon" (Letter 93, my emphasis). The text implies that to receive in the hand under other circumstances, outside of persecution, would be a grave fault.³ The saint based his opinion on the custom of the solitary monks, who reserved the Blessed Sacrament in their dwellings, and, in the absence of the priest or deacon, gave themselves Communion.

In his article on "Communion" in the *Dictionnaire d'Archeologie Chretienne*, LeClerq declares that the peace of Constantine was bringing the practice of Communion in the hand to an end. This reaffirms for us the reasoning of St. Basil that it was persecution that created the alternative of either receiving by hand or not receiving at all.

After persecution had ceased, evidently the practice of Communion in the hand persisted here and there. It was considered by Church authority to be an abuse to be rid of, since it was deemed to be contrary to the custom of the apostles.

Thus the Council of Rouen, which met in 650, says, "Do not put the Eucharist in the hands of any layman or laywomen but only in their mouths." The Council of Constantinople which was known as *in trullo* (not one of the ecumenical councils held there) prohibited the faithful from giving Communion to themselves (which is of course what happens when the Sacred Particle is placed in the hand of the communicant). It decreed an excommunication of one week's duration for those who would do so in the presence of a bishop, priest or deacon.

Of course, the promoters of “Communion in the hand” generally make little mention of the evidence we have brought forward. They do, however, make constant use of the text attributed to St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who lived in the fourth century at the same time as St. Basil.

Henri LeClerq summarized things as follows: “Saint Cyril of Jerusalem recommended to the faithful that on presenting themselves to receive Communion, they should have the right hand extended, with their fingers together, supported by the left hand, and with the palm a little bit concave; and at the moment in which the Body of Christ was deposited in the hand, the communicant would say: Amen.”

There is more to this text than just the above, however. It also goes on to propose the following: “Sanctify your eyes with contact with the Holy Body When your lips are still wet, touch your hand to your lips, and then pass you hand over your eyes, your forehead and your other senses, to sanctify them.” This rather odd (or even superstitious? Irreverent?) recommendation has caused scholars to question the authenticity of this text. Some think that perhaps there has been an interpolation, or that it is really the saint’s successor who wrote it.

It is not impossible that the text is really the work of the Patriarch John, who succeeded Cyril in Jerusalem. But this John was of suspect orthodoxy. This we know from the correspondence of St. Epiphanius, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine. So, in favor of Communion in the hand we have a text of dubious origin and questionable content. And on the other hand, we have reliable witnesses, including two great popes, that placing the Sacred Host in the mouth of the communicant was already common and unremarkable in at last the fifth century.

10. Who promotes Communion in the hand?

(This argument might be accused of the logical fallacy of “guilt by association.” But that argument is not necessarily false.) Those in the mainstream liturgical establishment (and their followers) who promote Communion in the hand are the same persons who, for the most part, have a distaste in general for worship of the Lord in the Holy Eucharist, and perpetual adoration in particular. A due, strong emphasis on the personal, bodily Real Presence of Christ our God in Holy Communion is not something which modern liturgists are noted for. Indeed, they even discourage it. Our attention is to be on the community, they say. In general, we can apply to the distorters (knowing and unknowing) of the Catholic doctrine and practice with respect to the Mass the following words of G. K. Chesterton: they are guilty of “the idolatry of the intermediate to the oblivion of the ultimate.” Well, these are the promoters of Communion in the hand. And they dislike and discourage the traditional manner of reception. Why?

11. Communion in the hand is too casual

What kind of foods do we eat with our hands? Often, in our “culture,” it is food to which one pays no attention. We eat popcorn with our hands, paying it no attention while our eyes are fixed on the movie screen. We munch on snacks at a party, while engaged in conversation. Particularly with children, but not only with them, this seems to be a very unwise thing to associate with the Most Holy Eucharist.

12. To possess and control God?

It is consoling to hear our Creator say to us, “I have carved you in the palm of My hand.” It is of primary importance to recall that “He made us, we belong to him.” But what is Communion in the hand saying at a symbolic level?

Often something is placed in our hands as a sign of ownership and control. The consummation of the purchase of a new home or automobile is in the handing over of the keys. We might even toss them in the air and triumphantly catch them. But should we take him (unnecessarily) into our hands whom the earth and the sea cannot contain?

13. Authentic inter-ritual and ecumenical considerations

If we glance around the Catholic world, at the twenty-one rites of the true Church, we must ask, “how do they receive Holy Communion?” If the present writer is not wrong, they do not or hardly ever receive Communion in their hands. And under those rare circumstances that they do, on particular

days, they receive in a far different manner than ourselves, taking pains to purify their hands both before and after.

We must further ask if some of the propaganda in favor of Communion in the hand, on the part of modern liturgists, is not deeply offensive to our fellow Catholics, such as when the traditional manner of receiving Communion is said to be “childish” (or when intinction is criticized).

And if we take a look at those of our separated brethren who share with us an explicit, and orthodox belief in the Holy Eucharist, we must ask ourselves: “How do they receive Communion?” Further, is true Christian unity promoted by the present decadent state of our Eucharistic practice, of which a significant part is Communion in the hand?

14. Its fruits . . .

We must be rigorously honest with ourselves. Has this practice really strengthened and clarified our faith in the Real Presence? Has it resulted in greater prayerfulness, greater love, and a more abundant fraternal charity? Are we as a people more and more awe-struck at taking the Lord’s Body into our hands?

At least one fruit has manifestly not come from the introduction of this practice. And this is a feature also of the larger liturgical reform in general: unity has been injured. It seems to this writer, at least, that Communion in the hand must share part of the blame for the decline among Catholics in belief in the Real Presence.

15. The Pope . . . and Mother Teresa of Calcutta

It is well known that the Holy Father is not a promoter of Communion in the hand. In his native Poland, the practice is still illicit, as indeed it is at the level of the universal Church. It was also illicit until very recently in the Vatican Basilica. And he has even refused to do it in countries where the practice has been granted by the Holy See.

The most remarkable example of this last is the time when the wife of the President of France, Madame Giscard d’Estaing approached the Pope for Holy Communion with hands outstretched. He ignored those hands and placed the Sacred Host into her (astonished) mouth. (Actually, she need not have been astonished; explicit instructions had been given that the Pope would not give Communion in the hand.)

The Missionaries of Charity have no qualms about touching Christ in the guise of the poor, lifting him out of the gutters, and cleaning his maggot infested wounds. They choose, however, not to touch him in his Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. All of Mother Teresa’s sisters are united both in their many hours of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and in their manner of reception of Holy Communion: on the tongue.

Mother Teresa herself evidently regards the practice in a somewhat negative light:

I will tell you a secret, since we have just a thousand close friends together, and also because we have the Missionaries of Charity with us, whom the Holy Spirit has sent into the world that the secrets of many hearts might be revealed. Not very long ago I said Mass and preached for their Mother, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and after breakfast we spent quite a long time talking in a little room. Suddenly, I found myself asking her—I don’t know why—“Mother, what do you think is the worst problem in the world today?” She more than anyone could name any number of candidates: famine, plague, disease, the breakdown of the family, rebellion against God, the corruption of the media, world debt, nuclear threat, and so on. Without pausing a second she said, “Wherever I go in the whole world, the thing that makes me the saddest is watching people receive Communion in the hand.”⁴

Thomas Aquinas reminds us that reverence demands that only what has been consecrated should touch the Blessed Sacrament. By baptism, the Christian has been consecrated to receive the Lord in Holy Communion, but not to distribute the Sacred Host to others or unnecessarily to touch it. “To touch the sacred species and to distribute them with their own hands is a privilege of the ordained, one which indicates an active participation in the ministry of the Eucharist” (*Dominicae Cenaе*, 11).

A practical course of action ought to be undertaken or these reflections would be next to useless. A minimal thing to do would be to broadcast far and wide the legal status of Communion in the hand and the urgent desire of the Church that we in fact not receive Communion in that manner. A thorough and well understood catechesis in the integral Catholic Faith should lead to a rejection of the practice. In particular, we should include a renewed and due emphasis on the Divinity of Christ, the burning love of his Sacred Heart for us, the Real Presence and the adoration due it, and the need for reparation.

Adult converts and catechumens and children preparing for First Communion have habitually been denied in many places even knowing about the traditional manner of receiving the Lord, let alone being allowed to choose that method. Without coercion, they should gently be guided towards what is objectively superior and a very important safeguard for their delicate faith.

Priests should refuse “Communion in the hand” unless it is manifestly being done with great care and correctness, including astute attention to the fragments. They should question their penitents as to their manner of receiving the Sacred Host, and, if the penitent receives in the hand, he should be encouraged to at least think about a healthy change for the better.

We have of course not argued that Communion in the hand is in itself evil or sacrilegious. And, together with the Pope we acknowledge that it can be done with reverence and care. But this practice has been the occasion of great harm to the Church and to souls. It has expedited “indifference, outrages and sacrileges” towards Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

It is implicated in the manifest lessening of faith in the Real Presence which we see in our times.

Reparation is needed. In addition to heartfelt prayer, let us make every effort, according to the light which the Lord has given us, and according to our state in life, and our resources, to contribute to the day when it will only be a reference in the history books.

1 Sess. 13, c. 8: “Now as to the reception of the sacrament, it was always the custom in the Church of God, that laymen should receive the communion from priests; but that priests when celebrating should communicate themselves; which custom, as coming down from an apostolical tradition, ought with justice and reason to be retained.” *In sacramentale autem sumptione semper in Ecclesia Dei mos fuit, ut laici a Sacerdotibus communionem acciperent; Sacerdotes autem celebrantes seipsos communicarent: qui mos, tamquam ex traditione Apostolica descendens, jure, ac merito retinere debet.*

2 “Hoc enim ore sumitur quod fide creditur.” Sermon. 91.3.

3 Just as if I were to say, “It is not a grave fault to miss Mass on a Sunday, if one has to take care of sick person.” This implies (what we already know) that when there is no such excusing cause, it would be a grave fault.

4 Fr. George William Rutler, Good Friday, 1989, sermon at St. Agnes Church, New York City.