

The good fruits of the COVID-19 'Eucharistic fast'

Benedictine liturgist says the suspension of congregational worship offered Catholics an opportunity to reflect on the true meaning of the Eucharist

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Benedictine Father François Cassingena-Trévedy believes Catholics [can learn something essential](#) from their forced fast from Holy Communion during the health pandemic.

Born in Rome in 1959, he grew up in France and in 1980 became a monk at Saint Martin's Abbey in Ligugé, part of Solesmes Congregation. Eight years later he was ordained to the presbyterate.

Father François is a liturgist, university professor, choirmaster and prolific author.

La Croix's Arnaud Bevilacqua recently spoke to him about the long liturgical lockdown that was imposed as a way to stop the spread of the coronavirus and what lessons might be derived from it.

La Croix: How can the "Eucharistic fast" that we experienced for more than two months help us re-examine this sacrament?

Father François Cassingena-Trévedy: What we have lived through, this felt lack, does not invite us to desert our churches, but rather to consider what needs to be questioned within ourselves about the meaning of the Eucharist.

We must erase from our minds the temptation to see the Mass as a simple dispenser of the Eucharistic wafer.

We are Christians in community. The very act of celebrating together is fundamental.

It is also a physical commitment through our bodies - primordial in Christianity. We need to sing, to listen, to see, to feel.

Without the Eucharistic celebration, we would lack the physical experience of community, the real presence of community.

The Christian exists through this celebration whose rituals are only temporary instruments.

Presence is not enclosed in the Eucharist, but it is the great resource of our faith.

In what way is the Eucharist the "source and summit" of Christian life?

In the Eucharist, there is of course a spiritual dimension, this personal encounter with the Lord.

However, the Eucharist is first of all the will to become the body of Christ.

Perhaps we rediscover that it is spiritual nourishment through the presence of the risen Christ, but it overflows and is a requirement of life.

The Eucharist is neither a wafer of the presence of Jesus, nor a sacred vitamin that creates spiritual emotion.

If missing it is only about being weaned from my moment with Jesus, I don't believe this shows a proper relationship with the Eucharist.

It is that communal celebration that leads to commitment to the faith of God's word that we listen to together and try to understand.

The Eucharistic celebration is both a culmination and a point of departure.

It is a requirement of Christian living.

How often do we, by our incoherence, happen to drain the real presence? How could I commune with Jesus in the host if I am not a little challenged by the presence of Christ in my brother?

In this sense, it is perhaps not a bad thing to have been deprived of it in order to question myself about a relationship that can turn out to be very materialistic.

But, in the end, how can we understand that Christ calls us to remember him in this way through the Eucharist?

It is fundamental to ask ourselves about the intention of Jesus, the one who reveals to us a Father rather than a stoic God.

Jesus gave his life and introduced us into this relationship with the Father, which is the only legitimate name of God.

I dare to say that I do not know God, but the Father. No one has ever seen God. It is the Son who has made God known and who sees me in secret.

By introducing us to this Father, Jesus makes us all brothers and sisters, forming a completely new, revolutionary humanity.

This is, for me, the meaning of the Eucharist, of this bread that the Father gives us.

This requires a conversion. What do I need in the Eucharist?

Is it a little sweet spiritual emotion or the need to become one with my brothers and sisters and to be in a filial relationship with this Father who Jesus reveals to me and who today gives me my bread, as we say in the prayer of the Our Father?

The Eucharist thus remains a mystery that can only be touched upon.