**Our Communion and Acting as the Body of Christ**

*At this table we put aside every worldly separation based on culture, class or other differences. Baptized, we no longer admit to distinctions based on age or sex or race or wealth. This communion is why all prejudice, all racism, all sexism, all deference to wealth and power must be banished from our parishes, our homes and our lives. This communion is why we will not call enemies those who are human beings like ourselves. This communion is why we will not commit the world’s resources to an escalating arms race while the poor die. We cannot. Not when we have feasted here on the “body broken” and “blood poured out” for the life of the world.*

*Let that be clear in the reverent way we walk forward to take the holy bread and cup. Let it be clear in the way ministers of communion announce: “The Body of Christ,” “The Blood of Christ.” Let it be clear in our “Amen!” Let it be clear in the songs and psalms we sing and the way we sing them. Let it be clear in the holy silence that fills this church when all have partaken.*

*Before coming forward we say, “Lord, I am not worthy.” We are never worthy of this table, for it is God’s grace and gift. Yet we do come forward. This is “food for the journey” that we began at baptism. We may eat of it when we are tired, when we are discouraged, even when we have failed. But not when we have forgotten the church, forgotten the way we began at the font; not when we have abandoned our struggle against evil and remain unrepentant for having done so. Let us examine our lives honestly each time before approaching the eucharist. “Worthy” none if us ever is, but properly prepared each one of us must be. Christ, present in the eucharist in us, calls us to be a holy communion, to grow in love and holiness for one another’s sake.*

(Joseph Cardinal Bernardin)

*Thirty years ago, I worked in a parish where one new Eucharistic minister brought Communion to an elderly woman and discovered that she had no one to do regular grocery shopping for her. Thus began a family ministry, in which the Eucharistic minister, as well as her husband and children, took turns shopping and visiting this parishioner. They beautifully expressed and extended what St. Paul called, the* koinonia, *or shared community, that bound them together as the Body of Christ.*

*A former graduate student of mine researched the experience of lay ministers who brought Communion to patients in a local hospital. She told the story of a woman who had a rather dramatic personal experience as she was giving Communion to a patient. The lay minister confided that as she was saying, “The body of Christ,” she felt, for the first time, a strong sense of herself and others as actual members of that body. Clearly, the performance of this ritual action had altered her personal and ecclesial identity*

(Margaret Mary Kelleher, OSU)