

Say Yes!

“Only Count the Yes Votes” is the provocative prescription for congregational life offered by a wise and hopeful pragmatist. Churches are urged to by-pass undue constraints and give permission to people when they are ready to lead and serve!

And now about the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Story 1: More than twenty ago Leslie and I took our son Sean (then eight) to Wesley’s Chapel in London. When it was time, we knelt at the altar to receive the elements, not knowing it wasn’t their practice to serve children. I could see the ambivalence of the celebrant. He moved his arms forward and then drew them back—engaged in a tug-of-war with his instincts and tradition. I’ll always remember his decision.

Story 2: Taking part in a Roman Catholic Mass when I was far from home, I read in the bulletin: “All are welcome to fully participate.” I was conflicted—knowing on the one hand the official teaching of their church does not assume an open Table but on the other feeling called to receive God’s blessing. I’ve often revisited and prayed about what I decided to do.

Both stories have the same ending. Jesus Christ offers himself to all who earnestly repent of their sins, are in love and charity with their neighbors, and intend to walk in God’s holy ways. The church is the instrument of this invitation – sometimes in spite of itself.

When it comes to mediating and embracing God’s graceful beckoning, my personal experience causes me to want to count the “Yes!” votes. Of course, it is not only appropriate but necessary that we should regularly reexamine our theology and practice of the sacrament. **It is hard to imagine anything more important than faithfully and authentically offering and receiving the body and blood of Christ.**

One time I was helping to serve the elements and a boy of nine or ten approached to receive the bread. I said, “This is a sign that Jesus loves you.” He responded, “Yes I know!”

Wouldn’t it be glorious to consistently set the Table with a sense of awe about God’s radical generosity, welcome all who come to feast, and rejoice when they announce, “Yes, I know the love of God in Jesus Christ”?



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