

## BOOK REVIEW

*Take and Eat: Living Eucharistically.* By Joseph DeGrocco. Totowa, NJ: Catholic Book Publishing, Resurrection Press, 2010. 109 pp. \$8.95. ISBN 978-1-933066-12-7.

On the First Sunday of Advent, 2011, Roman Catholic Churches in the English speaking world will begin using the newly translated third edition of the Roman Missal. This time of proximate preparation for the reception of the Missal will be critical as we seek to encourage Catholics to look deeply into the theology that the Missal offers us. We have a golden opportunity before us that we didn't quite take advantage of when the first edition of the Missal came out 40+ years ago. Msgr. Joseph DeGrocco has taken advantage of this golden opportunity and has done the Church a great service in the publication of his recent book, *Take and Eat: Living Eucharistically*.

Written as an expansion of a Mission talk he gives, *Take and Eat* is intended for a broad audience. Msgr. DeGrocco writes for the ordinary Catholic in the pew whom the great liturgical theologian Aidan Kavanagh would call "Mrs. Murphy." The genius of this book lies in its ability to incorporate quotes from Sacred Scripture, ecclesial and conciliar documents, concepts from child psychology studies, scenes from movies such as *Superman* and *The Wizard of Oz* and anecdotes from everyday life, all in one collection. Msgr. DeGrocco admits from the outset that the book is not meant to be a theological treatise on the Mass. Nor does the book necessarily present new material, at least for liturgical professionals or those engaged in the field of liturgical studies. It does however present things in a refreshingly new way.

Through the lens of the four-fold actions of Christ at the Last Supper, namely taking, blessing, breaking and giving, Msgr. DeGrocco makes explicit connections between what Catholics do at Mass, what Catholics believe and how Catholics are supposed to live their lives based on how they pray and what they believe. Through this mystagogical approach, he takes the ancient liturgical axiom, *Lex Ordandi, Lex Credendi* a step further to include *Lex Vivendi*. He also affords the reader the opportunity to relate to the dying and rising of Jesus, the paschal mystery, in real concrete ways. Sandwiched between the opening chapter called "Coming to the Eucharist" and the closing chapter called "Going Out and Living Eucharistically" are four chapters, each of which are devoted to one of the four fold actions.

One of the themes that comes up frequently and expectedly throughout the book is the Catholic understanding of sacramentality. God comes to us often in the ordinary activities of our daily life, and it is these ordinary activities that

we bring with us to the celebration of the Eucharist and that we ask God to transform. Msgr. DeGrocco reminds us on page 38: “How amazing it is that God allows us to offer ourselves as we are, not waiting (thank goodness!) for when we are all prettied up.” It is here that I think the book has its greatest impact for Mrs. Murphy and her neighbors in the pews at Sunday Mass. He reminds us that God became human so that humans might become more like God.

Throughout the book, Msgr. DeGrocco unpacks a number of important issues relevant to the celebration of the Eucharist. Some of these include the necessity of Sunday Mass attendance, the often forgotten connection between Baptism and the Eucharist, the importance of receiving the holy communion from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and the transforming power of the Eucharistic prayer. Because there are so many liturgical issues that are discussed throughout the book, I would highly recommend that it be on the reading list for parish liturgy committees and liturgical ministers, both ordained and lay.

In the Diocese of Rockville Centre, the implementation of the third edition of the Roman Missal has been a springboard for a diocesan initiative aimed at encouraging Catholics to return to the practice of the faith if they have been away, or if they are active church goers, to become more involved in the life of the Church. This diocesan initiative has been dubbed “Belong More Deeply.” In his Introduction to *Take and Eat*, Msgr. DeGrocco states: “This book is intended to help people enter more deeply into the Church’s liturgical celebration of the Eucharist.” The wide net that has been cast for the praying church in the publication of this book will undoubtedly help Catholics belong more deeply. Whether for reading as an individual or as part of a group, I hope many people will take advantage of the fine pastoral, liturgical and spiritual resource that Msgr. DeGrocco has given us in *Take and Eat: Living Eucharistically*.

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