Opinion



by NCR Staff

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In a commentary for NCR, Daryl Grigsby writes about the U.S. bishops' National Eucharistic Revival, beginning with the 2022 feast of Corpus Christi and concluding on the 2025 feast of Pentecost. "Each reception of the Eucharist expands my vision, heart and vocation," Grigsby says. "I therefore applaud the bishops' eucharistic revival. Yet, I am suspicious of the bishops' intent."

Of course, a Eucharistic revival could have meaning. But not in the hands of the men who run the U.S. bishops' conference.

Your opinion piece mentions one recent Eucharistic political stunt. After President Joe Biden took office last year there was another one, when U.S. bishops' conference leaders started a campaign to deny him Communion, using the deceptive slogan "Eucharistic coherence" — until they were brushed back by a stiff message from Cardinal Luis Ladaria.

Shifting gears, they launched planning for a $28-million dollar "Eucharistic Congress" — to be funded in part by the blatantly partisan leadership of the Knights of Columbus and held a few months before our next presidential election. It looks like an irresistible opportunity for more clerical politicking. Here in Arlington, Virginia, incidentally, our bishop just announced a "Eucharistic symposium" to be conducted in October by his retired colleague, Charles Chaput, a divisive figure with a weakness for Christian nationalism.

Let's be realistic. It isn't meaningful. It is political.

HENRY KELLEY

Arlington, Virginia



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Thank you for publishing Daryl Grigsby's commentary. It reminded me of scenes from the fictional (?) scene in "The Godfather" where murders are happening all over

the place while the subject who ordered them piously attends baptism.

I helped to coordinate a "Walk to Emmaus" (Methodist version of "Cursillo") in the early 1980s and spent two full days getting to know the men who attended. The pseudo-retreat took place at a convent in Indiana. On Saturday night, the Catholic members who had supported the Methodist team with their presentations availed themselves of the Vigil Mass on Saturday evening with the nuns. I was struck by how it took the better part of two days to feel a genuine closeness with the men who attended, but it only took an instant to be at one with those "receiving" (becoming) Communion during the Vigil Mass. That drove home to me the importance of the Eucharist, i.e., the "brokenness."

While thinking about Grigsby's reflection, I realized that we send the wrong message at every Mass, especially the weekend Masses. Often times, far more than half of the time spent in liturgy is with the liturgy of the word, which includes the homily. Only on special feasts or occasions will the homilist spend even a few minutes on the importance of Eucharist lived out in our daily lives, and rarely does the concept of "brokenness" enter the topic.

I have been to a couple of parishes where the Sunday Mass includes a chance for the congregants to come forward and make a physical offering during the preparation of the gifts. Many offer cash, but a lot also brings canned goods or other donations that could benefit persons in need. That practice seems to me to have the liturgy of the Eucharist better represent what should be happening in our lives.

LARRY HUBER

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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This article by Daryl Grigsby pierced my heart — it is just exactly how I feel about the Eucharist — and exactly how I feel about those of us who are Catholics. Grigsby's writing reminds me so much of how the bible quotes Jesus, while he was here on earth in his human form.

And it is my personal belief that if Jesus would come back to earth as a fully human being the way he did 2,022 years ago — the very same horrific things would wind up happening to him again — exactly like they did the first. "Send for Your Spirit, Lord,

and renew the face of the earth." Thank you for this life affirming article.

MARY WUDTKE

Chicago, Illinois

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While reading "Eucharistic revival can say something meaningful, if it's not political," I am reminded why the U.S. Roman Catholic Church is divided and in disarray. It is divided along political, racial and income lines. Don't expect this to change anytime soon.

The reasons are myriad because of the diverse agendas of America's bishops. Their differing views play out not only during their bi-annual U.S. bishops' conference meetings, but daily when one bishop takes his diocese in one direction while another goes in the polar opposite. Bishops and their priests message their agenda to the flock daily via social media, speaking engagements, as well as official church functions. The divide is great and growing.

The author speaks of primacy of the Sacrament of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church. This is as true as it is in other Christian churches such as the Orthodox, Anglican and Methodist churches. It is a glue that binds the community together and with their God. However, it's given its place in the life of the church to be used for good, not weaponized to bludgeon parishioners into submission.

MICHAEL J. MCDERMOTT

Tyler, Texas

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The suggestion which Daryl Grigsby made concerning the politicization of the Eucharist is a concern which I and many others also fear. Our shared experience for these past several years leads us to see that certain members of the U.S. bishops' conference will use the opportunity presented by the Eucharistic Revival to further divide the faithful into a them vs. us scenario. The fact that the meeting in July 2024 will occur in the middle of presidential campaign where at least one of the candidates is a Catholic was not lost on the organizers.

If the congress succeeds in promoting the Eucharist as the summit of our faith and keeps the rhetoric focused on the theology of the event and avoids the politics, they likely will succeed in encouraging our growth in the faith. If, however, the congress becomes another political forum, which the U.S. bishops' conference appeared to become after the election of 2020, then an opportunity for the church to grow will have been lost. The loss of credibility would be largely caused by some elements of the media as well as some conservative office holders.

I should hope my concerns are misled and the church succeeds in bringing us together. However, the history of the past few decades and the more recent politicization of the faithful would lead me to hope but not be surprised. There are several prelates who seem to think of their role as shepherds involves political posturing. They might have credibility with those who are politically aligned with them but they cause the larger church to be seen more as a political body and not as a sanctuary from those same influences.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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Daryl Grigsby has written a lovely piece. I'm glad to have read it in NCR.

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York

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Thank you for Daryl Grigsby's timely and thought-provoking article that helps some of us get into giddy-up mode for the current National Eucharist Revival.

The one paragraph that called out to me for further meditation was in regard to the suggestion of the "brokenness" of Jesus. As I've never felt comfortable with that term, my initial research revealed that it is also a point of controversy among

several noted doctors of divinity, theologians and dedicated bible scholars.

Rather than quote the many supporting prophecies from Old and New Testaments revealing the coming of the Messiah and his designation as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (confirmed in John: 1:29 by John the Baptist), let us simply remind ourselves that if Jesus was truly the Messiah, he had to conform to the specifics of the unblemished lamb sacrificed at the yearly Passover by the temple priests. That meant he had to be without blemish (in his case, sinless) and not a bone of his body was to be broken during the process of his sacrificial death. Every practicing Jew of that era knew the scriptures and that the savior Christ would have to fulfill that particular prophecy. As most of us should know, Jesus' body was pierced, bruised and lacerated but not broken and his spirit was strong and controlled to his last breath — supporting his reputed words in John 10:17-18: "No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down when I choose."

I maintain that Jesus' body was not a broken body, but a surrendered body, and I believe the breaking and sharing of the bread that we know as Eucharist has nothing to do with a broken body, but a resurrected body that desires to be remembered and welcomed within as the best friend and lover one can possibly imagine.

NANCY MCGUNAGLE

Kalispell, Montana

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