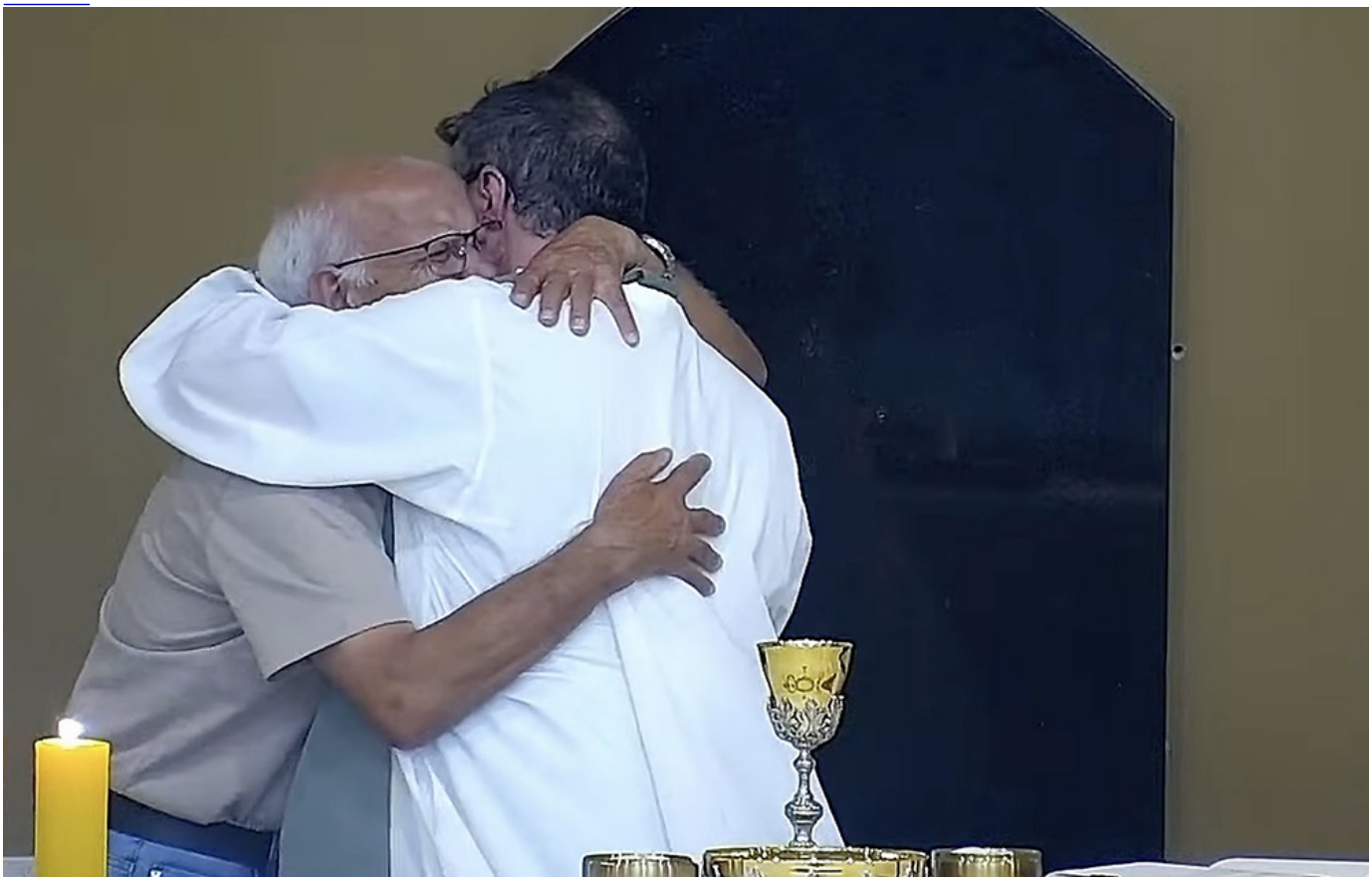
News



Fr. Carlos Henrique Fernandes of the Diocese of Tubarão, Brazil, right, embraces a crying elderly man named Marcos who approached the altar moments before Communion at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Tubarão Jan. 18, 2026. (OSV News/Communications Pastoral Ministry via YouTube)



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A video showing a crying elderly man approaching the altar during Mass — prompting the priest to interrupt the consecration and give him a hug — went viral in Brazil and moved millions of people.

Fr. Carlos Henrique Fernandes of the Diocese of Tubarão, in Santa Catarina state, was celebrating Mass Jan. 18 when, moments before giving Communion, he saw an elderly man coming to him.

A longtime extraordinary minister of holy Communion at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, the man, named Marcos, was attending Mass that day, along with his wife, but was not scheduled to help distribute Communion.

During the celebration, he was called by a relative and went out for a few minutes. When he came back into the church, he was visibly distressed.

"I was concluding the Eucharistic prayer when I saw him coming. I didn't know what was happening, but he was visibly shaken. I even feared he might be having a heart attack," Fernandes told OSV News.

The priest immediately interrupted the celebration and embraced Marcos for a long time, while the man continued to weep.

"Some of the men of the community came to help him. They took him to a nearby room, made him sit and gave him some water," Fernandes described.

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The priest then concluded the prayers and proceeded to give Communion to the faithful. He decided to go to Marcos and give him Communion as well before he was

taken home.

At that moment, he was informed by the other men that Marcos had received dramatic news minutes before: His 20-year-old grandson, who lived in a nearby city, had just committed suicide.

"Fr. Fernandes explained to those present that a tragedy had happened to Marcos. It was a tremendously moving moment for all of us who were there," a member of the parish, who preferred to remain anonymous, told OSV News.

Fernandes later shared his reflections with the participants of the celebration, telling them that Marcos came to the pulpit in despair because he was longing for Jesus' presence and solace.

"Not knowing whom to turn to, he remembered Jesus Christ. And, of course, he saw me there as well. We've known each other for 20 years, we're friends," he said.

That's why he made sure to give Communion to the man as well.

"I firmly believe in the power of Jesus's presence — his flesh, his blood, his soul — in the Eucharist. Marcos desperately needed it, especially at that moment," Fernandes reasoned.

The video of the event went viral in Brazil during the following week, with some posts reaching millions of views on social media. While the majority of viewers said they were deeply moved by the elderly man's suffering and by the way the priest comforted him, some criticized the interruption of the Eucharistic prayer as a kind of desecration.

"I accept the diversity of opinions, but if something like that happened again, I would do the same. For me, faith manifests itself in our actions," Fernandes told OSV News.

He said that failing to act at that moment would have been monstrous toward the elderly man.

"He needed me and needed Jesus in Communion," Fernandes declared, stressing that it's contradictory to love the invisible God, but don't pay attention to those in front of our eyes.

A couple of days after the Mass, Fernandes was informed that Marcos was calm and more at peace with his loss. Faith, the priest argued, is central in that process.

"With faith, there's a greater sense of lightness and purpose. Life can be very hard and priests must be side by side with the people," he said.

"Like Pope Francis said, we must be shepherds with the smell of the sheep."