



Food for the Journey

You may have heard the expression: “*No Pain, No Gain*”! As cliché as it may sound, something is to be said about this statement. Bodybuilders or athletes understand this the most. As they train their bodies for a particular sport, they must discipline themselves and go through rigorous exercises. Body aches are expected and necessary as the body grows and adapts. Therefore, “*No Pain, No Gain*” means that to achieve something worthwhile, one must seriously engage in the work, which often demands personal commitment and sacrifice. Could this be said also about our spiritual life, a life of spiritual connection with God sustained by the Holy Eucharist?

The Church teaches that the Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life. This Holy Bread also nurtures our soul because it is the Lord we consume! We say the Lord makes Himself so small that we can have Him as our Daily Bread. As we eat and drink this Holy Food, we are promised eternal life and forgiveness of sin. However, the everyday experience of our reception of the Holy Eucharist is that of a regular thing; we do not often feel extra strong physically; the problems at home or personally won't simply go away. Where is its power? Where is the beautiful thing we have been taught?

The answer to these questions is surprisingly simple: “*No Pain, No Gain*”. Let me explain. The power of the Holy Eucharist can only be felt if the recipient engages seriously in the works of faith. For example, we believe that it is the Lord who gives Himself in the Holy Eucharist. When we receive the Holy Eucharist, we receive His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. We become one with Him. In other words, it satisfies our heart's desire and makes us holy and good!

Looking back now, I realize I did not feel a thing about the Mass because I did not understand it. Compared perhaps to soccer to which I was so committed to - as to wake up early to run and play around 5:30AM! I immensely enjoyed soccer because I learned, practiced, and played it daily. Mass? Not really. I did not learn about it. I did not believe it. I did not know the Word of God and what it meant to me. I did not pray or do any fasting or preparation before Mass. In truth, I did not seriously practice my faith. I did not know; therefore, I did not love. I did not love; therefore, I did not care; I did not care, consequently, I needed to prepare. I did not feel anything because I had yet to do any work of faith before or after Mass. “*No Pain, No Gain*” for me!

The saints of God understand the meaning of the phrase: “*No Pain, No Gain*” very well. Saint John Marie Vianney, in particular, endured a lot of hardships and struggles. He engaged in pastoral works and prepared his soul with penance, extreme fasting, austere life, and prayer. He became very close to Christ, and his works were so influential that he surrendered himself to God. The saint teaches us that only in doing these works can we know the power of that love and trust and, therefore, the satisfaction promised by the Holy Eucharist.

After giving Himself entirely to us in the Holy Eucharist, the Lord asks us to go and make disciples of all nations by taking Him with us as food for the journey! He asks us to engage in the works of salvation and not remain idle! Do you want to know and feel the power of the presence of the Lord in the Holy Eucharist? Remember, “*No Pain, No Gain*”! Let's get to work!

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