

EUCCHARIST in the Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi

(Note: 7 of his 10 Letters contain a reference to the Most Holy Eucharist)

Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance

(a.k.a. 1st Version of the Letter to the Faithful), 1209-1215

“All those who love the Lord *with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength* and love their neighbors as themselves, who hate their bodies with their vices and sins, who receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who produce worthy fruits of penance” (I, 1-4).

Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance

(a.k.a. 2nd Version of the Letter to the Faithful), 1220?

“We must, of course, confess all our sins to a priest and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ from him. Whoever does not eat His flesh and drink His blood *cannot enter the kingdom of God*. But let him eat and drink worthily because anyone who receives *unworthily, not distinguishing*, that is, not discerning, *the Body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself*” (22-24).

Exhortations to the Clergy

(a.k.a. Letters to the Clergy), Earlier [before 1219] and Later [1220] Editions

“Let all of us, clergymen, consider the great sin and the ignorance some have toward the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and His most holy names and written words that consecrate His Body. We know It cannot be His Body without first being consecrated by word. For we have and see nothing bodily of the Most High in this world except His Body and Blood, His names and words through which we have been made and redeemed *from death to life* . . . Are we not moved by piety at these things when the pious Lord puts Himself into our hands and we touch Him and receive Him daily with our mouth?” (1-3, 8).

The First Letter to the Custodians (1220)

“With all that is in me and more I beg you that, when it is fitting and you judge it expedient, you humbly beg the clergy to revere above all else the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and His holy names and the written words that sanctify His Body . . . In every sermon you give, remind people about penance and that no one can be saved unless he receives the most holy Body and Blood of the Lord” (2, 6).

A Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples (1220)

“Therefore I strongly advise you, my Lords, to put aside all care and preoccupation and receive the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with fervor in holy remembrance of Him. May you foster such honor to the Lord among the people entrusted to you . . .” (6-7).

The Second Letter to the Custodians (1220)

“In the sight of our Lord God, I beg you, as much as I can, to give to bishops and other members of the clergy those letters treating of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord; and to keep in mind what we have recommended to you about these things” (4-5).

The Earlier Rule (The Rule Without a Papal Seal), 1209/1210-1221

“Contrite and having confessed in this way [i.e., to ‘discerning and Catholic priests’], let them receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with great humility and respect remembering what the Lord says: *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and Do this in memory of me*” (XX, 5-6).

A Letter to the Entire Order (1225-1226) “Kissing your feet, therefore, and with all the love of which I am capable, I implore all of you brothers to show all possible reverence and honor to the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in Whom that which is in heaven and on earth has been brought to peace and reconciled to almighty God . . . How holy, just and fitting must be he who touches with his hands, receives in his heart and mouth, and offers to others to be received the One Who is not about to die but Who is to conquer and be glorified, upon Whom *the angels longed to gaze* . . . Let everyone be struck with fear, let the whole world tremble, and let the heavens exult when Christ, the Son of the living God, is present on the altar in the hands of a priest! O wonderful loftiness and stupendous dignity! O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! The Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under an ordinary piece of bread! Brothers, look at the humility of God, and *pour out your hearts before Him!* Humble yourselves that you may be exalted by Him! Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally! I admonish and exhort you in the Lord, therefore, to celebrate only one Mass a day according to the rite of the Holy Church in those places where the brothers dwell” (12-13, 22, 26-30).

The Testament (1226) “And I act this way [i.e., reverencing and respecting Catholic priests] because, in this world I see nothing corporally of the most high Son of God except His most holy Body and Blood which they receive and which they alone administer to others” (10).

The Admonitions (undated) “All those who see the sacrament sanctified by the words of the Lord upon the altar at the hands of the priest in the form of bread and wine, and who do not see and believe according to the Spirit and the Divinity that it is truly the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, are condemned. [This] is affirmed by the Most High Himself Who says: *This is my Body and the Blood of my new covenant [which will be shed for many]; and Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.* It is the Spirit of the Lord, therefore, That lives in Its faithful, That receives the Body and Blood of the Lord. All others who do not share in this same Spirit and presume to receive Him eat and drink *judgment on themselves.* Therefore: *children, how long will you be hard of heart? Why do you not know the truth and believe in the Son of God?* Behold, each day He humbles Himself as when He came *from the royal throne* into the Virgin’s womb; each day He Himself comes to us, appearing humbly; each day He comes down *from the bosom of the Father* upon the altar in the hands of a priest. As He revealed Himself to the holy apostles in true flesh, so He reveals Himself to us now in sacred bread. And as they saw only His flesh by the insight of their flesh, yet believed that He was God as they contemplated Him with their spiritual eyes, let us, as we see bread and wine with our bodily eyes, see and firmly believe that they are His most holy Body and Blood living and true. And in this way the Lord is always with His faithful, as He Himself says: *Behold I am with you until the end of the age*” (*First Admonition*, 8-22).

“Blessed is that servant who has faith in the clergy who live uprightly according to the rite of the Roman Church. Woe to those who look down upon them; for even though they be sinners, no one should judge them because the Lord alone reserves judgment on them to Himself. For just as their ministry is greater in its concerns for the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which they receive and they alone minister to others, so those who sin against them commit more of a sin than [if they had sinned] against all other persons in this world” (*Twenty-Sixth Admonition*, 1-4).