**The Banquet of Ordinary Time**

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

 It was a Sunday in May, and I was seven years old.

I had a new veil that was mine, a “pre-owned” white dress that had been my sister’s, and a bouquet of pink and white lace-wrapped carnations whose scent I almost think I can still smell today. I could tell you what my siblings wore that day, what the felt banners in Church looked like, where my family and I sat, what songs we sung, who celebrated with me, and the date and time it happened.

Most of all, I still remember that mix of joy, awe and wonder that filled a heart that was so impatient to receive First Holy Communion. My friends and I had spent over a year preparing for that day and trying to grasp, as best seven-year-olds could, what was about to happen.

 While it may be true that, at seven, I *knew* so little, I sometimes envy that seven-year-old who *believed* so much. She understood, in a way that, perhaps, comes more easily to seven-year-olds than it does to the rest of us, that a miracle was about to happen.

 Since then, I have had many more Sundays in May, Saturdays in December, Thursdays in July, and Tuesdays in September when I share that same miracle all over again. I have read more, learned more, and tried to understand more about the sacrifice of the Mass and what it truly is. Yet, I sometimes wonder if the lavishly generous way Christ shares Himself with me – with us – in the Eucharist can make it easy to take this most extraordinary of gifts for granted.

When I start to do that, I think back to a homily I heard when I was at Mass on a vacation long ago. It invited us to receive the Eucharist every time as though it was the first time, the last time, and the only time. It struck me at the time as good advice. It still does.

I know the profound joy of the *first* time and hope to hold that in my heart.

When the *last* time will be is still, thankfully, hidden from me. But I know someday it will come. When it comes for me, I hope to have the same serene trust I have seen in the eyes of loved ones when I held their hands as they received the food for their journeys home.

 What I have, now, are all the ones in between the first and the last. I hope that all the celebrations of First Holy Communions that fill the month of May will remind me to cherish each of those encounters with Christ with the same love, gratitude, and reverence I would have if they were each the *only* one.

 Since that long ago May, I have been blessed to celebrate First Communions for many others near and dear to me. Whenever I can, I like to go to the Mass when First Communions will be celebrated in my parish. I hope you may have the chance to do so too. Sometimes, I simply need to see that joy, that reverence, that excitement, and, yes, that deep faith of those younger and somehow wiser than I.

 If this May you are receiving your First Holy Communion, I will be praying for you in a special way. May you cherish the joy of knowing how close Christ will be to you.

 If this May, instead, you will be receiving your 3,184th Holy Communion, I will be praying for you, too. I hope that you – and I – will still cherish how close Christ will be to us in these extraordinary banquets of our ordinary times.

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