

**Pastoral Council**  
**Thoughts for Reflection**  
**April 17, 2016**

*The Eucharist is not a Prize for the Perfect*

*I would also point out that the Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.*

This sentence appears in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Family, *Amoris Laetitia*, published this past week by Pope Francis.

What is expressed in that sentence is beautiful and true. The Catholic Church has never held out communion as a prize for perfect people. If it had, all of us would have to abstain from ever receiving the Eucharist! We are indeed all weak and in need of the powerful medicine available to us in the Eucharist.

In order to further clarify what this sentence means, we should be very clear about what is meant by weakness in relation to the Eucharist. True, sin is a form of weakness. But not all weakness is sin. In fact, we find our true strength through realizing our inherent weakness. And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses...” (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

We sin when we rise up in our own strength, through pride and through the misuse of our free will. We sin because we are weak, and because we have inherited a sinful nature as a result of Adam’s disobedience.

Our true strength, then, lies in God’s strength. In the Eucharist, we ingest God’s strength – Jesus’ supernatural being - to make our weak natures more like His. But note that we should not ingest Jesus’ body and blood in a state of sin lest, as St. Paul tells us, we bring condemnation on ourselves (1 Cor. 11:29).

Sin has no place in God, and God has no place in sin. Therefore, in order to prepare for communion, it is necessary to surrender our sense of personal strength. We must admit our imperfections, repent of our sins, and to commit to making a change. That alone prepares us to ingest the perfection of God.

We should not approach the Eucharist without first taking those steps.