

“YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST”: “The Power in “Amen”

“Why should we say AMEN and nothing else at the time of receiving Communion?” The word “amen” is basically understood to mean “so be it” or “I believe it to be true.” Jesus said “Amen, I say to you...” in a number of Gospel passages to emphasize an important truth about one of His teachings. For example, our Lord uses it in Matthew 5, during His “Sermon on the Mount” (verses 18 and 26) to emphasize the importance of obeying God’s commandments and making every effort to reconcile with others, respectively. In John 6:53, it reads Jesus said to them, “amen, amen, I say to you” 4 times as He emphasizes His being “the Bread of life.” “Jesus said to them, ‘amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life within you.’” It later says that many found this teaching too strange to believe, and walked away, no longer following Him.

Not everyone is willing to accept Jesus’ truths, especially when He states what the Catholic Church has believed since His time with the Apostles—that using sacramental signs (visible signs of God’s invisible love) of bread and wine, Jesus gives us, His actual Body and Blood in each Mass. Although it may appear to still look, smell, and taste like bread and wine, we believe in faith that Jesus has actually changed the inner essence of those elements during the Eucharist into His Body and Blood. It’s important that all Catholics who are receiving Communion respond with that same word of “Amen” and ONLY that word, for it expresses unity as the one Body of Christ, as members of Christ’s Catholic Church, through receiving Communion. Thus, it’s NOT appropriate to say anything else upon reception, such as “thank you,” “My Lord and my God,” “I believe,” or any other variations.

So it is with “Amen,” said after certain prayers or preparing to receive Communion.

Our “Amen,” though, is not only meant to convey that we truly believe that it’s Christ’s Body and Blood we’re being gifted with. It’s also meant to indicate: “Yes, I believe in all that is taught by the Catholic Church teaches. Yes, I am a baptized member of the Catholic Church, united to the Body of Christ, which is the Church, including fellow Catholics around the world, and the Communion of saints in Heaven, Yes, I believe and obey the lawful teaching authority of the Church (the Pope and Bishops, who are part of an unbroken chain link of authority going back all the way to the Apostles). Yes, I give myself to the Lord fully—mind, body, and spirit, in all my strengths and weaknesses, as



Jesus has given His whole life out of love for me. Yes, I humbly come before Him, free of any mortal or serious sins, as I receive the pure gift of His Holy

Body and Blood.” Wow! All of that is behind that one four-letter word. If any of the above beliefs is missing, then our “Amen” becomes more hollow, untrue, even hypocritical. As Jesus says in Matthew 5:37, “Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’ Anything more is from the evil one.” We all know the power that words can have—for better or worse—when they are spoken to us. Thus, our “Amen” should ring totally true, signifying our desire to share in the oneness of eternal power and glorious love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who gives His very Self to keep us strong and clear-visioned in His Truth for the long journey home to Heaven! (Fr. Steve Lape)