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There was a little orphan, Joe, who went to be examined by the orphanage doctor. When he came back the nun asked, 'What did he say to you Joe'? 'He said, "what a miserable little specimen you are". And then Joe added, 'But Sister, I don't think he knew I had made my first Holy Communion'. Whatever he was in the doctor's eyes, Joe knew from receiving Our Lord in the Holy Communion that he was special in God's.

When Jesus said before his ascension that he would be with us always until the end of time, he was primarily thinking of the Mass. There He is present to us in a unique way. This is called His 'real presence'. There he shares his life with us - 'anyone who receives me in Holy Communion will draw life from me', He tells us today.

Sharing his life will mean that we model our lives on His. St Paul tells us today we must be careful about the lives we lead, like intelligent and not senseless people. Receiving the Bread of life at Mass will ensure that we are focussed and not live meaningless lives. We can also help each other along the way. Friendships built-up through coming to Mass will reinforce our faith. The wider world also needs the witness of a body of people who draw their spiritual strength from Christ. We, as mass-going people, are meant to replicate Christ's presence in the world especially that part of it in which we live and work. That's our mission.

St Pauls also says in the second reading that we must not live aimless lives but recognise what God's will is for each of us. Receiving Holy Communion will ensure that the Will of God will take precedence over other options especially if they are at variance with His plan. However, this can run counter to what our own wounded self-will often wants. The Mass is a sacrifice and unless we are willing to sacrifice our self-will and put it at the service of God's will then our participation in the Eucharist

will fall short. The aim is that our will for ourselves and God's will for us should dovetail.

So let's be careful not to receive Holy Communion unprepared or in a cavalier way but have our minds and hearts focussed on what we're doing so that we receive the Lord in an appropriate manner. Part of our preparation will mean that we are no strangers to the Sacrament of Penance. We can easily pick up habits of sin which make our souls a less welcoming place for our Lord to enter when we receive him in Holy Communion.

Our lives in this world should reflect the bond which we forge with our Lord at Mass. The love we have for Jesus in the Mass will overflow into our everyday lives and enrich all our relationships. In this way we are preparing ourselves for the Eternal banquet of heaven.