

Visiting a Green House and Receiving Communion

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My wife and I enjoy visiting the Green House this time of year at a local college. We went yesterday. It takes time to walk slowly through and enjoy all the flowers and plants. Yesterday the building also filled also with lots of little children and Senior Citizens being taken on a day trip. That spoiled my enjoyment. They are as entitled to visit as much as I am, of course; but their focus was not the same. The children were just having noisy fun and needed constantly corraling by harried Staff and the Elders needed constantly help moving and getting around corners or doing stairs. The kids were on the run while the Seniors were struggling along the very crowded aisles with their walkers and wheel chairs. We left and returned later in the day when there were no groups on day trips present.

We take flowers and plants seriously, enjoying their variegated shapes and colors, trying to learn more about old favorites and to discover new ones. For us, that requires respectful contemplation and keen, undistracted observation. It can be a very pleasant time. It made me think of the Eucharist.

There seems to be two main approaches to Holy Communion. One focuses on the Wafer and Wine. The benefits of Communion are conveyed simply by receiving them. The Communicants are fed spiritual food in the form of the Elements and all they must do is merely open their mouths. It is a mechanical thing. People go to the rail, receive and go back to their seat.

The other approach focuses on the Communicants themselves. Scripture is very clear. To receive properly, Communicants must be baptized Believers who have examined their hearts and lives for sin prior to reception, making amends for any found. When they receive they must do so in a worthy manner, recognizing what the wafer and wine represent. They are to open their mouths to receive the elements, yes, but if they are to benefit they must "feed on them in their hearts by faith and with thanksgiving" for what Christ has done for them at Calvary.

In other words, receiving Communion is a very personal, intentional, informed contemplative experience, much like what we think visiting a Green House should be. The focus is far more on looking at the plants than on the plants being looked at.