

## Homily of Corpus Christi The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ Year A, 2023

### Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6:51-58

The Last Supper was the first Eucharistic celebration. Then he took the bread, and said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.’ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you’ (Luke 22:14-20). Every Eucharistic celebration is a re-enactment of the first Eucharistic celebration by Jesus. St. Paul reminds us in the second reading that the cup of blessing we bless is a participation in the blood of Christ; and that the bread we break is a participation in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). Jesus commands us to break the bread and share the cup in his memory (Luke 22:19).

Jesus did not say, “It is like my body.” Or, “It resembles my body.” Or, “It is in place of my body.” He said, “This is my body.” “This is my blood.” This is why we believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. This is why we adore the Body of Jesus in the Tabernacle. When we come into a Catholic Church, we see a tabernacle and a tabernacle light, we know, immediately, that the Eucharist is present in the tabernacle; we genuflect in reverence. Jesus is no longer physically with us, but he is spiritually present with us in the Eucharist.

The Eucharistic celebration is popularly called “Mass” which comes from the Latin word *missa*, meaning to be sent. When the Eucharistic celebration used to be in Latin, the priest ended the celebration by saying, *Ite missa est*, literally meaning, “Go, you are sent to witness what you have celebrated.” The term Eucharist is derived from the Greek word *eucharistein*, which means thanksgiving. Every Eucharistic celebration is a thanksgiving to God for the gift of Jesus Christ, for our salvation, and for the eternal life we have received through his death and resurrection. Every Eucharistic celebration is a thanksgiving to God for the continued spiritual presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Every Eucharistic celebration is a thanksgiving to God for the gift of the Eucharist, our spiritual food, which nourishes us and empowers us for our earthly journey.

The Eucharistic celebration is the highest prayer of the Catholic Church. It is not a ‘service’ but Christ’s sacrifice. Vatican II Document states, “Eucharistic sacrifice is the source and summit of the Christian life” (LG 11). In Eucharistic celebration, we share in Christ’s sacrifice.

The Eucharist is the most distinctive mark of the Catholic Church and at the center of the Catholic faith. We must guard it with pride, respect, honor, and reverence. Someone advised priests and indeed all of us, “Take each Mass as your first Mass, your last Mass, and your only Mass.” This means that we are required to, prayerfully, give every Mass our maximum attention and participation. The command that we continue to celebrate the Eucharist is the last will of Jesus. Just as we take people’s last will seriously, more so, we are to take Jesus’ last will very seriously.

We are to receive the Eucharist worthily. We do not receive the Eucharist because it is “time for Holy Communion,” or because everyone else in the pew is proceeding to receive. Spiritual Communion is good enough for those who, for some reason, are unable to receive the Holy Communion. We must not disregard St. Paul’s 1 Corinthians 11:28-29, “Let each one, then, examine himself before eating of the bread and drinking of the cup. Otherwise, he drinks his own condemnation in not recognizing the body.” This is why the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us to prepare for the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

A communicant is a bearer of Jesus Christ. This is a deep and profound spiritual responsibility. This is why St. Augustine cautions us, “Behold what you are, become what you receive.” Through the transforming power of the Eucharist, may we imitate and witness Jesus whom we receive and bear in our bodies.

The mystical powers of the Eucharist and the Eucharistic celebration are well known. Eucharistic miracles are countless and experienced everywhere. The miracles begin with the prayer of consecration by the priest and the changing of bread to the Body, and wine to the Blood of Jesus Christ. In our Eucharistic celebration and adoration, may we experience our own Eucharistic miracles. May we be sanctified and our sins expiated, and may we experience the transformative power of the Eucharist. May forces of darkness be cast out. May we experience physical and spiritual healings. In our Eucharistic celebration and adoration, may our prayers be acceptable in the presence of God. Amen.

Jesus taught his disciples, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.’ The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’ [Jesus answered] ‘... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ...’ ...Then many of his disciples who were listening said, ‘This saying is hard; who can accept it?’ ... As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, ‘Do you also want to leave?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God’” (John 6:51-69).

The unbelief and misunderstanding about the Eucharist have continued to this very moment. But we who believe declare with Peter, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

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