

Homily for Corpus Christi – The Body and Blood of Christ A 2020

“Do this in memory of me” said Jesus instituting the Eucharist at the Last Supper. *Memory* for the disciples was understood as making present. What happened at the Last Supper happens for us every time we celebrate the Eucharist together – we join Jesus at the Last Supper. Christ, therefore, is truly present with us and we receive his Body and Blood in the form of bread and wine. We place the consecrated bread in the tabernacle, the Body and Blood of Christ, to remind us that Christ is alive and with us on our journey always. Christ is truly present with and among us. We come into that special presence of Christ in adoration of the blessed sacrament knowing that, by gathering in his presence, his power, love and goodness will enter more fully into our lives. We gather to give thanks and praise to God that Jesus watches over us so closely and so lovingly.

Deuteronomy reminds us of the journey the Hebrews made through the desert after their escape from slavery in Egypt. It shows us how God rescued them again and again on a journey that, for many, lasted a life time. When they were hungry, he provided them with food, with manna which they had never seen before. In Hebrew it is written **Mah-nah**, which translated means *what is this?*

Is not our faith journey somewhat similar to the Hebrews desert experience? We are happy when things go right but when times are hard or the way ahead seems impossible, we struggle. We call out to the Lord for help and, yes, sometimes we grumble, only to discover that God comes to our help again and again, but not always in the way we expect.

The eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life (Vat II). The beginning and the end. The be all and end all of everything. It is a food that we cannot receive anywhere else. Of all Jesus’ commands, it is the one command, **Do this in Memory of Me**, to which we have been faithful down through the centuries. In the eucharist we are, what Bishop Robert Barron calls, **Christified**. It provides the necessary food for the journey.

We too ask the question *what is this?* with regard to the Eucharist. One solution was to use the word TRANSUBSTANTIATION – a word with which we often struggle. Yet, it is word that helps us understand the full reality of the Eucharist. Break the word three part: Trans – Sub – Stance. Trans is a word we fully understand today. It describes a complete change of the core reality into something different. Sub means *under* or the *basis* of something. And stance another word with which we are familiar. The eucharist is the basis on which our faith life stands. The prefix Trans implies a change in the core reality of the bread and wine. What appears to be bread and wine becomes the Body and Blood of Christ. Christ, therefore is fully present, real, not just spiritually or symbolically, **REAL**. Remembering that God spoke creation into being. Let there be Light and there was light. Let there be life and there was life. The words of consecration *This is my Body* and *This is my Blood*, the words of Jesus spoken by the priest in the name of Jesus (*persona Christi*) are also creative. At the same time, it is through the eucharist that we become the Body of Christ; we are transformed into Christ who lives in us. As our hymn states:

One bread, one body, one Lord of all;
one cup of blessing which we bless;
and we, though many, throughout the earth,
we are one body in this one Lord.

As St Augustine says : *At the eucharist, then, it is the sacrament of yourselves that is placed on the Lord's altar, and it is the sacrament of yourselves that you receive.* c.f 1 Cor 12:27. Or as St Paul says: *Now you are the body of Christ, and individually you are members of it.* Augustine goes on to say that: *Anyone, however, who receives this sacrament of unity and does not keep the bond of peace, does not receive it to his profit, but as a testimony against himself.*

Sermon 272: PL 38, 1246-1248

We are called therefore to reverence one another as the Body of Christ and attend to one another's needs as Christ does for us.

Listen to Pope Francis:

Today, we celebrate Jesus "the living bread which came down from heaven" (Jn 6:51), food to meet our hunger for eternal life, strength for our journey. The Eucharist communicates the Lord's love for us: a love so great that it nourishes us with Himself; a freely given love, always available to every person who hungers and needs to regenerate his own strength. To live the experience of faith means to allow oneself to be nourished by the Lord and to build one's own existence not with material goods but with the reality that does not perish: the gifts of God, his Word and his Body. . . The Eucharist brings us together. The Body of the Lord makes us a single thing, a single family, the People of God reunited around Jesus, the Bread of life. . . Our faith in the true presence of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, in the consecrated Bread and Wine, is authentic if we commit ourselves to walk behind Him and with Him. A people who adore are a people who walk! Walk with Him and behind Him, as we seek to practice His Commandment, the one he gave the disciples at the Last Supper: "Even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn 13:34). People who adore God in the Eucharist are people who walk in charity.

A final story

*A frog walks into a bank and walks up to the teller — one Ms. **Patricia Black**. "I would like a £50,000 **loan**," he says. Patricia Black says, "I'm sorry, sir, but we would need some collateral for a loan of that size." The frog produces a small porcelain figurine of a dog, and asks, "Will this do? It's a family heirloom." Patricia tells the frog that she would need something more significant, but the frog is insistent. Patricia calls her boss over and explains the situation. After assessing the situation, the bank manager says, "**It's a knick-knack Patty Black. Give the frog a loan.**"*