

Corpus Christi - A
Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a;;
I Corinthians 10:16-17;
John 6:51-58
Little Flower - 6/18/17

My Brothers and Sisters,

The parish staff and I want to wish all fathers a very blessed and happy Father's Day. Thank you to all the fathers in our parish and all the men of our parish who assume a parental role in the lives of children.

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. In today's reading from Deuteronomy, Moses reminded the Israelites that God had fed them with manna on their journey from Egypt through the desert to the promised land. The manna in the desert foreshadowed the gift of the Eucharist. However, in today's Gospel, Jesus contrasted the manna with the Eucharist: *"Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever."*

Faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is at the heart of Catholic faith. Today's Gospel could not be more clear. Jesus began by telling his listeners that the bread he would give would be his flesh for the life of the world. The Jews clearly understood the implications of what he was saying when they quarreled among themselves asking how he could give them his flesh to eat. Jesus then became even more direct: *"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. 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."*

As Christians, we believe that Scripture is the living Word of God, God speaking to us today. Therefore, Jesus' words in today's Gospel are addressed to us today. According to multiple studies and surveys, today many Catholics, including some who regularly attend Mass, no longer believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. I would even argue that this at least partially explains why so many Catholics no longer attend Mass weekly. If Jesus really is speaking to us through today's Gospel, we need to recapture or deepen our faith in Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist. One possibility might be participating in adoration in our Blessed Sacrament chapel.

Today's reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians also speaks to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist: *"The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?"* However, I think the final verse is more significant: *"Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."*

One of the themes of Pentecost was that the Holy Spirit is the soul or life principle of the Church, therefore the principle of unity within the Church. Today St. Paul reminds us that sharing the Eucharist, receiving the Body and Blood of Christ together, also unites us to God and to one another because it deepens our relationship as sons and daughters of God and brothers and sisters of one another.

My brothers and sisters, this week we were blessed with the appointment of Bishop Charles Thompson of Evansville as our new Archbishop. I know most of us were sad when Cardinal Tobin was transferred to Newark. I am convinced that Cardinal Tobin had a hand in Bishop Thompson's appointment, which is a great recommendation. As Catholics, we believe that one of the primary responsibilities of the Pope is to be a symbol and source of unity in the Church universal. However, we also believe that one of the primary responsibilities of an archbishop is to be a symbol and source of unity within an archdiocese. Therefore, on this Father's Day, I would suggest that we thank God for Bishop Thompson's appointment and pray for him as he prepares to lead our Archdiocese as a father.