

Corpus Christi - A
Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a;
I Corinthians 10:16-17;
John 6:51-58
Little Flower - 6/14/20

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, better known as Corpus Christi, which means *Body of Christ*.

Last Sunday we celebrated our first in-person Sunday Masses since March 15. Although our numbers were small, our community was well represented. The total number of people in church at Mass last weekend was 115. We had parishioners as old as 93 and as young as 10 months.

After the 9:30 Mass last Sunday, Tom and I were talking. When in-person Masses first stopped, we both thought that when we came back, we would come back all at once, which is obviously not the case. From the beginning, you were telling us how much you missed coming together for Sunday Eucharist and how much you missed receiving the Eucharist. Therefore, it seemed to me that if people really were missing Sunday Eucharist, we might see at least a temporary surge in attendance. However, because of the nature and spread of COVID-19, it is clear that it will be some time before many people return to Mass.

Before the pandemic, most of us never would have thought we would only be able to attend Sunday Eucharist by watching it on Facebook. Yet this is what we have been doing, and many are still doing. If this pandemic had occurred 20 years ago, we would not have been able to watch Mass. At the beginning we had some discussion whether we should stream our Masses or just encourage everyone to watch the Masses streamed by the Archdiocese. Rightly we decided it was important to live stream our Sunday Mass in order to remain connected with each other. After Mass is live streamed, I always read the comments. I think it says a lot about our parish that you are responding to the prayers, sending greetings, and wishing peace to each other.

Our recent fast from the Eucharist highlights two dimensions of today's feast. In today's reading from Deuteronomy, Moses reminds the Israelites how God fed them with manna in the desert during their journey of deliverance from slavery in Egypt. According to Moses, this food not only fed them physically but also spiritually. God fed them with manna to show them *"that not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the LORD."*

In today's Gospel, which is the climax of Jesus' Eucharistic Discourse, Jesus tells us that his flesh is true food and his blood is true drink and is necessary for eternal life: *"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."* In other words, just as physical food is essential to physical life, the Eucharist is essential to eternal life.

The second theme is found in today's reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. Paul wrote, *"Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."* We frequently refer to receiving the Eucharist as receiving Holy Communion. The Eucharist is not only a sign of our union with God and our unity with one another. Holy Communion deepens our union with God and our unity with one another. On our own, we cannot bring about union with God or unity with one another. Just as we need God, we need the Eucharist. Because the Church and the world are so fractured today, we need the Eucharist more than ever.

My brothers and sisters, there is a prayer, often attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, that captures the Eucharist: *"O holy banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of his passion is renewed, the soul is filled with grace, and there is given to us a pledge of future glory."*