

Corpus Christi - B  
Exodus 24:3-8;  
Hebrews 9:11-15;  
Mark 14:12-16, 22-26  
Little Flower - 6/7/21

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, commonly called Corpus Christi, which means *Body of Christ*.

Two themes run through today's readings. They are the themes of covenant and sacrifice. A biblical covenant is a relationship of love between God and his people. Today's reading from Exodus tells the story of the establishment of God's covenant with Israel, which was sealed by the offering of holocausts and peace offerings and the sprinkling of the people with the blood of the covenant. The Gospel tells the story of the Last Supper, the institution of the Eucharist, and the establishment of the New Covenant in Christ's blood. The reading from Hebrews is a theological reflection on the New Covenant in Christ's blood.

It seems appropriate that we are celebrating Corpus Christi the Sunday before Catholics in the Archdiocese are expected to return to Sunday Eucharist unless they are unable because of health issues.

The past year and three months have been an interesting time in the life of the Church. What distinguishes us as Catholics is that we are a sacramental church. More specifically, Sunday Eucharist defines us as Catholics. As the Second Vatican Council stated, "...the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows" [SC10].

When the pandemic began, many Catholics found it difficult not to be able to attend Sunday Eucharist. It was especially difficult when we were unable to come together to celebrate Holy Week and Easter. For me it was really strange celebrating Eucharist without our parish family in church. I was not used to celebrating in front of a camera. During that time, Katie Leszcynski was our lector, and I kept thinking how much easier it probably was for her as a former TV sportscaster who regularly spoke to a camera. However, the ability to live stream was a blessing for all of us. If the pandemic had happened a few years earlier, we would not have been able continue to celebrate as a community.

At the same time, because the Son of God became human and lived among us as one of us, the Church is called to be a flesh and blood community. We cannot be that kind of community virtually. We need to be together to support and strengthen one another in faith. Likewise, spiritual communion is not the same as receiving Communion. Unfortunately, many people seem to have grown comfortable watching Sunday Mass on TV. One of our challenges as a parish will be to invite and encourage everyone who is able to return to Mass. I have also noticed that some who attended every Sunday pre-pandemic now attend sporadically. A second challenge for you will be to reestablish the habit of attending Sunday Mass in person every week. As the Council said, "...the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed."

It also seems to me that it is important for us to come together at Sunday Eucharist if we want to restart many of our parish ministries. Until we are coming together as a community, as a family, I do not think our ministries will be as alive as they could be, and I certainly do not think we will be able to initiate any new ministries. Again, as the Council said, Sunday Eucharist "is the font from which all her power flows."

My brothers and sisters, when we receive the Eucharist, we receive Holy Communion. It the Eucharist that sustains and deepens our union with God and our unity with each other. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "*Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf*" [1 Cor. 10:17].