

Corpus Christi - A  
Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a;  
I Corinthians 10:16-17;  
John 6:51-58  
Little Flower - 6/11/23

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, commonly called Corpus Christi. Today also marks the beginning of the second year of the National Eucharistic Revival, the year focused on parish Eucharistic Revival.

You may remember that this Eucharistic Revival was born out of studies that showed that seven out of ten Catholics no longer believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Rather, they believe the Eucharist is only a symbol of Christ's body and blood.

In today's Gospel, it is clear that the people of Jesus' time struggled with this as well. When Jesus said that the bread he would give would be his flesh for the life of the world, *"the Jews quarreled among themselves saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'"* Jesus, however, did not back down: *"'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.'"* It is interesting to note that St. John does not refer to the body and blood of Christ in this passage but to the flesh and blood of Christ. Scripture scholars suggest that the phrase *flesh and blood* expresses the Church's faith that when we receive the Eucharist, we are receiving the living Christ. The gift of the Eucharist is Jesus Himself, his life and his love.

Belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist first requires an act of faith in the person of Jesus himself. Do we really believe in Jesus, i.e., do we really believe that he is truly the Son of God? If so, in light of Scripture and Tradition, we should have no problem also believing that Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper to be continued in the Church for all time. Of course, if we do not believe that Jesus is truly the Son of God, we will not be able to believe in Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist.

Belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist also requires belief in miracles. I really believe most people believe in miracles. People pray for miracles when someone is seriously injured, sick, or dying. Recently thousands of people have been traveling to Missouri to view the seemingly incorrupt remains of Benedictine Sister Wilhelmina Lancaster who died in 2019. As Catholic Christians, we believe in the miracle of the Eucharist. At every Mass, Jesus acting through the priests of the Church throughout the world transforms ordinary bread and wine into his own Body and Blood.

How are we to understand the mystery? An analogy with ordinary food can help. When we eat a steak or a hamburger, the steak or hamburger becomes part of us. It is no longer steak or hamburger. Our soul makes us to be who and what we are. However, our soul, our life principle, is confined by the limits of our body. We cannot make something outside of us part of us. When Jesus said, "This is my body," he was identifying the bread with himself. In a sense, he was extending his life principle to the bread so that it was no longer bread but his body. Paradoxically, unlike the steak or hamburger, when we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, Christ does not become more part of us: we become more part of Christ.

In today's New Testament reading, 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. Just as the Eucharist is not only a sign of Christ's body and blood, the Eucharist also is not only a sign of our union of God and our unity with one another. Holy Communion deepens our union with God and our unity with one another.

My brothers and sisters, during this second year of the Eucharistic Revival, let us celebrate and deepen our faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.