

HOMILY – CORPUS CHRISTI SUNDAY YEAR C 2016

By the time Bobby arrived, the football game had already started. “Why are you so late?” asked his friend. “I couldn’t decide between going to church and going to the football game. So I tossed a coin,” said Bobby. “But that shouldn’t have taken too long.” said the friend. “Well, I had to toss it 35 times.”

Today, we celebrate the solemn feast of Corpus Christi. It is three feasts in one: *the feast of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the feast of the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the feast of the Real Presence of Jesus in this Sacrament.*

Corpus Christi is a doctrinal feast established for three purposes: 1) *to give God collective thanks for Christ’s abiding presence with us in the Eucharist* 2) *to instruct us in the Mystery, Faith and devotion surrounding the Eucharist,* and 3) *to teach us to appreciate and make use of the great gift of the Holy Eucharist, both as a Sacrament and as a sacrifice.*

Why did Jesus give us this sacrament in the first place? (1) **Jesus promised to be with us until the end of time** (Matthew 28:20). As Jesus said, “*Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.*” In the Eucharist he provides a visible sign and *an effective means of him being present to us and us being present to him.* (2) Jesus said that **he came that we may have life and have it to the full** (John 20:20). In the Eucharist he provides a visible means of communicating this life to us so that we can be *fully alive both in this world and in the next.* As Jesus said, “*Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day*” (John 6:53-54).

In the Gospel passage we heard about the multiplication of the loaves. Here Jesus satisfies the physical hunger of his audience first before he teaches them about the spiritual food that they needed for life eternal. As food gets digested nourishes our physical body, the Body and Blood of Jesus nourishes our soul, strengthens us to face our daily challenges, and fills us with joy and peace.

In the year 1263 a priest from Prague was on his way to Rome making a pilgrimage asking God for help to strengthen his faith since he was having doubts about his vocation. Along the way he stopped in Bolsena 70 miles north of Rome. While celebrating Mass there, as he raised the host during the consecration, the bread turned into flesh and began to bleed. The drops of

blood fell onto the small white cloth on the altar, called the corporal. It was in the following year, 1264, Pope Urban IV instituted the feast of the Body and Blood of Jesus, today's feast Corpus Christi. That blood-stained corporal is preserved in the Basilica of Orvieto, north of Rome, in Italy.

These miracles are not the most important aspect of our spiritual life and we are not bound to believe them either. And once the bread has become real flesh and wine has become real blood we don't need anybody's help to believe in it. But the peak of our faith is **to believe the consecrated bread and wine as the Body and Blood of Jesus**. I can understand the difficulty of believing this. And this difficulty hasn't just started either today or yesterday. We can see the very moment Jesus taught them saying, *I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you* (Jn 6: 53). Instantly a group of people went away from him saying, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" And no longer they followed him.

Always I get my eyes filled with tears whenever I am reminded that God comes into my hand in the form of bread and wine and God uses me, unworthy, sinful man as his instrument. It is not my merits keeps me with him, instead His unending love and mercy towards me.

As we celebrate this Feast 'Corpus Christi' I would like to call your attention to one of the instructions from the '*General Instruction of the Roman Missal # 160*.

'When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his head before the sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the body of the Lord from the minister. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of each communicant. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the precious blood'. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal GIRM 160).

It is not the person who receives the Body/Blood of Jesus bows their head but the person behind. This will not delay the distribution of Communion.

Today we ask God to increase our faith and help us to be transformed more like him as we receive his Body and Blood.