

Homily for Corpus Christi - June 14, 2020

A survey in the United States in the mid-Nineteen-nineties indicated that only one-third of Catholics believe that the bread and wine we offer God at Mass become the Real Presence of Jesus. After twenty-five years of working hard to clearly teach the Church's belief about the Eucharist, another survey that came out last year showed that beliefs had not improved. Only one-third to one-fourth of Catholics responded that they believe in the Real Presence in the way the Church teaches and expresses the belief.

That does not mean everyone is a heretic. The surveys I am talking about were in English. In both surveys there were many problems with the wording of the questions. And other surveys produced different results depending on how they formulated the questions.

For example, think about how you might answer a question about the Eucharist if it speaks of
Jesus being really present,
or substantially present,
or actually present,
or physically present,
or literally present
or the Eucharist is a "symbol" of Jesus present.

Still, the results are a cause for concern. We need to recommit ourselves to the importance of what Christ is doing for us here at every Mass. One of the main reasons we say that the Eucharist is the Source and Summit of our Life in Christ is because - He truly comes here - for us. He truly gives Himself to us - here. He truly takes our small offering of bread and wine and makes it His Body and Blood - His very self - to feed us.

To speak of the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament does not mean that, of all the different ways

God is present to us, this is just the one way we prefer. It also does not mean that God is everywhere so OF COURSE He's also here. It also does not mean we simply remember Him at this moment, and that makes Him present in our minds.

We proclaim the bread and the wine become Christ, "whole and entire, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity." Our understanding is that Jesus said something very clearly. Granted, it is a lot for us to take in, but He said it. His words create and move and change. He is God - He can do what He says. He created the world from nothing. He loves each of us into being.

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The more we enter into the Mass, the more we recognize that the gift of Himself in the Eucharist is totally in character with Jesus. Isn't that just like Him?

In the Incarnation, He emptied Himself, He lowered Himself, in order to join humanity to His divinity.

He became a slave, a servant. He is the First who became the Last in order to lift us up. He washed feet, healed, taught, was beaten and killed - for us. He made Himself vulnerable for us. Isn't that just like Him?

And He taught us that His way was the way for all of us to follow. We are to serve, to forgive, and to turn the other cheek. We are to feed and clothe and teach. We are to enter into the vulnerability of loving.

And He told us that when we do THIS - the Mass - He would make Himself vulnerable for us again and again. The glorified Christ comes to us in small items for us to ignore or to worship. He makes Himself small for us again. Isn't that just like Him?

He comes to us to be our food. We need His food. We need Him to be our food. We cannot be vulnerable in love without Him being with us and strengthening us.

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In an essay written in Two Thousand-Thirteen, a convert to the Church wrote this:

The first time I had the opportunity to eat the bread and drink the wine in memory of Christ, nothing could have stopped me, not even if a thousand swords and pikes had risen up to block my way, not even if I were to die the next second. That is how hungry, after my barren life of proud atheism, how hungry I was for Christ, or any memorandum of Him. As I recall, this was at an Anglican service to which a friend had invited me: that was how profoundly I was moved at what was, by all accounts, merely a sign or reminder of Christ. No one claimed it was He Himself. The Roman Catholics (and, of course, our brothers the Orthodox) make a much stronger claim, one that is shocking. They claim the bread and wine is Him. It is God.

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If the Catholic claim is correct, then God is as shocking and surprising in His incarnation to us, here and now, as He was to the astonished and appalled Jews in First Century Palestine. If the Catholic claim is honest, what happens at Mass is a miracle more intimate than marriage and childbirth.

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During these past few months we have longed for the Eucharist. Hopefully everyone has rediscovered their longing for The Bread of Life. We pray for those who have not noticed their need. The intimacy that God shows us

in coming to us in this way is hard to fathom. The tenderness and the life that spring from it is overwhelming when we think about it.

During this COVID-19 quarantine, we have had to cut back on the ways we can get together and worship Christ as a group. Everyone is still experimenting with ways to come together.

I think we are ready to make another step. I ask you to consider Eucharistic Adoration. Before the lock-down, we had several times each week people could come for Adoration: on Sunday, Thursday, and Friday.

I ask those of you who have been involved with Eucharistic Adoration to consider helping it restart. If you think you can be the coordinator of a time, contact the Office. For the near future, Adoration would take place here in Church, not in the Chapel.