

**HOMILY**  
**The Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ**  
**(Corpus Christi)**  
**Sunday, June 18, 2006**

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**St. John the Evangelist Parish**  
**Davison, Michigan**

Perhaps you heard the story of a six-year-old Jewish boy named Mortakai who refused to go to school. Each day, despite his protests, his mother walked him back to school; but as soon as she left him, he ran back home only to have his mother bring him back to the school once again. This scenario played itself out for several days, with Mortakai continuing to refuse to stay in school and his parents refusing to acquiesce to his desires. No bribe or threat could convince Mortakai to change his mind. Finally, in desperation, the boy's parents took him to their rabbi who said, "If the boy won't listen to words, bring him to me."

When the parents brought their son into the rabbi's study, he said not a word. He simply picked up the boy and held him to his heart for a long time. Then, without speaking a word, he set him down. What words alone could not accomplish, a silent embrace did. Not only did Mortakai go to school willingly, he went on to become a great scholar and rabbi.

This parable wonderfully expresses the essence of the feast we celebrate today. Through this Eucharist, God physically embraces us and holds us close to his divine heart. Words remain important, but at times the power of the word can be relative, and when we need them most, words can fail us. When this occurs, we have recourse to another language—the language of the Body and Blood of the Lord. For is not the gift of Jesus' body and blood in the form of bread and wine a physical embrace, a kiss that holds us close to his heart?

Here we might recall the story of another small child. There comes a time, usually late in the afternoon, when children tire of playing with their regular amusements. It is then that a little one begins to torment the cat. The day has been long and suppertime is drawing near; the child is tired and begins

to whine. The mother is tired but must turn her attention to supper. She begins to scold. The child, tense and miserable, begins to whimper. In that moment, the mother knows exactly what to do. She scoops up the child and, without speaking, holds the child to her heart.

So, too, the Eucharist. Each of us comes to the Eucharist at times tense, overwhelmed, and needy. Like the little child torturing the cat, we are unhappy with ourselves. There are times when we have no words, want to hear no words, will not heed any words. Nevertheless, in that wordless moment, God picks us up and, like a parent calming their child, touches us. In that moment, only a physical embrace, a physical touch, will suffice.

This is why God in Jesus gave us the Eucharist. It is this physical embrace that we celebrate today. How powerful it is when we reach out our hands or open our mouth and come to union with the Lord of Life. The Lord knows our every need. Do we deep down hunger for something, or should I say someone, more in our life? Are we in need of forgiveness or reassurance or hope? Are we in need of a companion who truly understands? Are we struggling with an issue in health or work or home or life? Reach out and receive him. Let him enter the chamber of your soul and fill you with his life-giving presence.

It saddens me when people say they no longer need the Church. Where would any of us be if we didn't have the Eucharist? Look at the persons who this weekend will profess their faith in the Church, be confirmed and, at long last, after much waiting and desire, receive the Eucharist for the very first time. Many cannot find the words to capture their joy and sentiment.

I don't know about you, but where would any of us be if we didn't have the Eucharist? In the world of so many unknowns and heavy burdens, what a big difference the Eucharist makes in your life. There's not a day that someone doesn't ask, "How do you do all you do? How do you hold it together?" It's no secret—it is the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of the Lord. It's not just me; it's Jesus working big time in me.