

***The Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ
(Corpus Christi)
Homily ~ June 26, 2011***

***Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski
St. John the Evangelist Parish
Davison, Michigan***

Back in the 1970s there was a lot of liturgical innovation going on. Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, invited a young priest to celebrate Mass at *The Catholic Worker* in New York City. He decided to do something that he thought was relevant and hip. He asked Dorothy if she had a coffee cup he could borrow. She found one in the kitchen and brought it to him. He took that cup and used it as the chalice to celebrate Mass.

When it was over, Dorothy picked up the cup, found a small gardening tool, and went to the backyard. She knelt down, dug a hole, kissed the coffee cup, and buried it in the earth.

With that simple gesture, Dorothy Day showed that she understood something that so many of us today do not. She knew that Jesus was truly present in something as ordinary as a ceramic cup, and that it could never be just a coffee cup again. She understood the power and the reality of Jesus' presence in the Blessed Sacrament, which is really the sum and substance of what we celebrate on this feast, Corpus Christi.

The reason for what we will do today—celebrating with the monstrance, the music, the procession—isn't to glorify an inanimate object, a bit of bread contained in glass. It is to be reminded that in that bread we have been given Christ. Not an idea. Not a symbol. Not a formula from some theology book. It is wider, deeper, and more mysterious than that. Look at the host...and look at Christ.

Everything we are, everything we believe, everything we celebrate around this altar, comes down to that incredible truth. What began two thousand years ago in an upper room continues here and now and at altars around the world. The very source of our salvation is transformed into something we can hold in the palm of our hand.

I am reminded of a priest who was pouring some unconsecrated altar breads from a bag to get ready for Mass. Some fell on the floor. He bent down and picked up the stray wafers, just ordinary hosts, unconsecrated, to discard them. He held one between his thumb and forefinger and showed it to somebody standing nearby. "Just think," He said, "what this could have become."

Just think what we become when we receive the body of Christ. We become nothing less than living tabernacles—God dwells within us. As the hymn tells us, we become what we receive, and what we receive becomes us. This is the Great Mystery, the Great Gift of the Blessed Sacrament.

I know that some find it difficult to believe that bread and wine change into the Body and Blood of Jesus. I can understand your doubts. We do not see any change in the bread or wine. There is no difference in the taste; the bread still tastes like bread; the wine still tastes like wine. It is going against logic to say that the bread and wine change into the Body and Blood of Jesus despite no change in appearance. However, as Paul says, in the Christian life we walk not by sight but by faith. We are called to be humble and open to God performing a miracle every time we gather around this altar, the miracle of the Eucharist.

Can you be humble enough to add faith to your intellect and reason, to admit that intellect by itself does not provide all the answers, and that God can perform miracles every day making it possible for bread and wine to become the Body and Blood of Jesus while keeping the same appearance? Can you add faith to your intellect? When you submit to God, you will not lose anything; you will gain everything.

There is a beautiful chant, “Trust, Surrender, Believe, Receive.” Come to Jesus, not like a scientist trying to analyze, but come in trust, in surrender. Come to believe and receive his love. Say to Jesus that you believe he is really present in the Blessed Sacrament and gradually grow from merely believing in Jesus, to loving Jesus and being loved by Jesus. Come to visit Jesus in the tabernacle here in church often where you will have a wonderful opportunity to trust, surrender, believe and receive the love of Jesus.


How can one believe in the Real Presence? What does that best is the Eucharist itself—with each encounter, with each breaking of the bread, with each hour of adoration, Jesus’ Real Presence becomes undeniable. His presence in the Eucharist cannot be talked about—it must be experienced. A half-hour before the monstrance and periods before a tabernacle with the light burning bright—nothing compares, nothing instructs so sweetly or fills one with such gentleness and peace. Pope John Paul II wrote every one of his encyclicals while seated before the tabernacle in his chapel.

The great Thomas Merton, monk and author, said, “There is a power that goes forth from that sacrament. A power so vast that whoever receives it will never be the same.”

As a symbol of our love for Jesus, we will carry him in procession today. It is also a symbol of Jesus’ love for us. We cannot carry Jesus through every street or road in our parish, but nonetheless, we know that Jesus is with us. His blood poured out for us. His body was broken for us. As we walk together with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, thank him for all he has done. Ask him for whatever you need, for yourself, your family, for our world. Remember the words of the consecration of every Mass recalling Jesus giving himself for us: *“This is my Body which will be given up for you... This is the cup of my blood... It will be shed for you.”*

May Jesus in the Eucharist always be the very center and heart of our Church, the center and heart of our faith, the center and heart of our parish, and the center and heart of the lives of each of us.

~140th Jubilee ~

1871  2011