

Homily: Corpus Christi: 2023: Cycle A: Dt. 8: 2-3, 14b-16a; Ps. 147; 1 Corth 10: 16-17; Jn 6: 51-58

“The Mystery of Faith”

At every Mass the priest says after the consecration: ***The Mystery of Faith***, and then we proclaim our faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Let’s be honest: **it truly takes a lot of faith to believe in the doctrine on the Holy Eucharist**: that at every Mass when the priest prays over the bread and wine and invokes the Holy Spirit, the elements are changed into the ***Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity*** of the God-man Jesus Christ. We hear of surveys of Catholics in which it is noted that many Catholics do not believe the Eucharist is really the Body and Blood of Jesus, but is merely a symbolic representation of Him. It is tragic if that is the case, but it shouldn’t surprise us since it takes much faith to believe in this true doctrine. We need to say in this regard: *Lord I believe, help my unbelief.*

1. **The gift of the Eucharist.** It is truly the Real Presence of Jesus Christ under the sacramental signs of bread and wine. As He says in the Gospel of John, chapter 6, today, “*My flesh is true (real) food and my blood is true (real) drink.*” Jesus in His kindness and understanding of human nature gives us His Body and Blood, but under what to our physical senses tastes like bread and wine, looks like bread and wine, and feels like bread and wine. **Why did He do it this way,** as I asked some 1st Communicants once? Well, because as a little 2nd grade girl answered me that day, *Father, Jesus gave us Holy Communion this way because otherwise we would be disgusting - if it really tasted like flesh and blood.*” So true. And I followed up with: well, what is the danger to our faith in that Holy Communion tastes like bread and wine? And a little boy answered: *The danger is we won’t believe it is really Jesus*” - the spiritual wisdom of children! This is a truth, like that of the Holy Trinity, which we must never take for granted, even though it is easy to do so. Sometimes we even do this in our language when talking about the Eucharist: Catholics will talk about receiving “the bread and wine.” That is not correct☺: we should catch ourselves and always say: *I have received the Body of Christ and the Precious Blood of Christ.*
2. **Holy Mass is the ultimate gift God allows us to participate in on this earth.** The main reason for this is because Jesus’s one eternal Sacrifice on Calvary is made

present again spiritually and sacramentally in the Eucharist for the salvation of the human race. Do we thank God for the gift of the Mass? If we realize what a gift it is, we will never see participating in the Mass as optional, but will do all in our power to always be at Mass on every Sunday and Holy Day, and make the necessary sacrifices to bring that about, in regards to work, travel, vacation, and other obligations. To miss Mass is objectively a mortal sin: only because it is such a special spiritual gift. A little plug too for week-day Mass: coming to daily Mass is a blessing beyond imagining, but one of those things you only discover if you actually do it.

3. **Jesus in the Gospel today implores us to receive His Body and Blood**, and says, *“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life within you.”* This is strong statement and needs to be put in context. Does this mean all those who are not Catholic and are not able to receive the Holy Eucharist at Mass have no divine life in them? We really can’t answer that question; hopefully God assists them in other ways, but this is **a strong incentive** nonetheless to consider becoming Catholic if one is not; and in fact, many people down through the centuries have become Catholics because they wanted to be able to receive this gift of the Lord’s Body and Blood at Mass. This is also the reason that if a Catholic currently cannot receive Holy Communion, e.g., because of a marriage outside of the Church or because of some serious sin that needs to be repented of, confessed, and hopefully corrected over time, to do everything in one’s wherewithal to correct this and so be able to come back to Holy Communion. Please contact me, if need be, for help with this reality. But remember if one is not able to receive actual Communion until such a situation is corrected, one can make what is called a **Spiritual Communion** and ask Jesus to come into one’s heart spiritually, which is the next best thing. I put that good spiritual communion prayer in my bulletin column periodically: *for one who can’t receive Communion right now, or to pray during the week if you cannot come to daily Mass. Finally, the conditions for receiving Holy Communion properly disposed are: no conscious mortal sin on one’s soul; a 1 hour fast (also no gum/candy), and having faith and reverence.* May we thank the Lord daily for this gift of the Eucharist and draw close to Him there - in a spirit of humility, adoration, and love. God bless you.