

“The Feast of Corpus Christi”
June 14, 2020
Fr. Max Oliva, S.J.

THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

*“I am the living bread that came down
from heaven; whoever eats this bread
will live forever.”*
(John 6)

Here is a short story that highlights Jesus’ words:

One Sunday morning, after having distributed Holy Communion, the priest was standing at the altar preparing to continue the Mass when he felt a tug on his vestment. There was his young altar server looking up at him. The altar server said, “Father, please may I have some bread from heaven?” The priest, realizing he had missed the server at Communion, stood for a moment, overwhelmed with emotion. This young person already knew in a profound and simple way, the great gift of the Eucharist.

The Eucharist – the Body and Blood of Christ – is God’s great gift of love to us. It is a sacrament of love. In it we receive the very person of the risen Christ. The Lord nourishes us in the Eucharist, giving us food for our faith journey.

We can consider the Eucharist from a variety of perspectives:

It is the true presence of Christ. Not just a symbol. Jesus did not say at the Last Supper, “This is *like* my body; this is *like* my blood.” He said, “This **is** my body; this **is** my blood.” Broken and poured out for you.

The spiritual nourishment we receive in the Eucharist (even in spiritual communion) draws us closer to Christ in friendship. It helps us to fight against temptation and helps us to be bread for others.

The sacrificial character of the Eucharist – Christ’s passion and death, seen in reference to his blood being poured out - helps us to carry whatever crosses come our way.

The Eucharist builds community, fosters unity as St. Paul teaches in his first letter to the Corinthians: “Because the loaf of bread is one, we though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”

St. Thomas Aquinas taught that the Eucharist has three major components: memory of the past, a present grace, and hope of eternal life.

To pull these ideas together, allow me to share a second story with you. It comes from an Irish-Canadian friend of mine who lives in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. His name is Davey.

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Davey is an adult convert to Catholicism. All was not smooth in the transition, from being a Protestant, though, as he shares.

“For many years after my conversion, I had a difficult time accepting Communion in the meaning of the Catholic Church, as the real body and blood of Christ. One morning, after working the night shift I came home and went to bed. There had been nothing special about the day that had me thinking about my faith; it was just another day. I fell asleep quickly and slept soundly.

In a dream, I found myself in a church. It was pure white with everything having a marble-like texture. I was standing in what I can only describe as the choir balcony. I looked down and across the interior of the church I saw Our Blessed Mother. She beckoned me to come down to the lower level, which I did. I came to a large crucifix on the wall and looked up at it. As I did so, Christ’s arms came away from the cross and his hands came together. As he opened his hands, a round disk fell from them.

It seemed to fall very slowly, turning round and round as it descended. I put out my hands to catch the disk, and when I did I saw it was a communion host. I placed it in my mouth. “This is my Body,” was clearly the message. I woke with a start at that point, sweating and fearful, fully expecting God to be in the room with me. Since that night I have not missed receiving Holy Communion.”

CONCLUSION

*Shepherd true,
We give thanks to you
For your sweetest grace:
Our sacrifice of peace;*

*Light that dispels the
Darkness that sometimes
Grips us
Nourishment for our body
Manna for our spirit.*

*Your precious Body and Blood.
Your Word made flesh.*

AMEN

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