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Annunciation Parish, Shumway, Illinois
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The Solemnity of *Corpus Christi* (B)

"How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for me" (Psalm 116:12)? These words of the Psalmist have long resounded in my heart and soul.

My friends, do you know what it is that the Lord has done for you? We cannot come before him grateful hearts, we cannot fully unite ourselves with this Eucharist, with this act of thanksgiving, unless we have recognized the good deeds the Lord has done for us.

The passage from the Book of Exodus, which we heard a few moments ago, occurs after the Lord has given the law to Moses. In giving the law, the Lord gives us the path of life, the fullness of joy in his presence (cf. Psalm 16:11). He has given us these signposts, as it were, that lead to authentic freedom, joy and peace.

After giving the law, the Lord sealed his covenant with us by the sprinkling of blood, uniting the people to himself and giving them a means to atone for sins.

The reading from the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that the Lord Jesus has established a new covenant with us so that we might "receive the promised eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15).

Saint Mark's account of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper shows us how Jesus established this new covenant with us. In giving his own Body and Blood in the Eucharist the Lord sealed the new covenant with his own blood, "once for all" (Hebrews 7:27).

More personally, my life has not always been easy - at times it has been almost unbearable - but I have always been certain of the Lord's closeness to me. In times of profound grief, of grave illness, of uncertainty; in times of great joy and gladness and gratitude; I have always known the Lord's abiding presence in the Eucharist. To the tabernacle I have often come seeking solace and strength, joy and peace, and this I have always found, never leaving disappointed. I have not always received the answers I sought, but I have always been calmed by his love.

It is through the Eucharist, which we celebrate today in a particular way on this Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ that we see most clearly "all the good he has done for [us]" (Psalm 116:12). The Eucharist is the Lord's own answer to suffering and pain; he does not simply erase suffering with a brush of his hand; such would be beneath his dignity and unworthy of his love. Rather, he does the inconceivable: he enters into suffering itself, to suffer with us and for us, to give his all for us. He redeems us with his own blood that we

might live in and for him. This is true and authentic love; this is the love that is always present with us through the ministry of his priests who are configured to him in such a way as to act in his person; without their ministry there can be no celebration of the Eucharist.

"How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for me?" I knew that the Lord asked one thing of me; the gift of my life. Seeing how he had given himself so freely to me, how could I refuse to give myself freely to him?

I heard him say, "Follow me," and, "Do this in remembrance of me." "The cup of salvation I will take up," I said, "and I will call upon the name of the name of the LORD" (Psalm 116:13). What is this cup of salvation?

It is the same chalice to which he referred when he said to the Apostles James and John, "The chalice that I drink you will drink" (Mark 10:39). Can it be any other than the chalice offered to Christ during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Mark 14:36)? It is his cup of suffering, the cup of his blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It is this cup that I offered to take up, both for my own sanctification and for that of others, in keeping with his will.

I sensed that the Lord wanted to use me to make his presence known in the sacraments and there was no other response I could offer.

He continues to call men to share in his priestly ministry and, indeed, we need such priests. We need men of courage and faith to heed his command to make bring the Eucharist to every part of the world. If those whom he calls would answer in faith and offer themselves for his service, I daresay we would have no parish without a priest.

On Friday, Holy Mother Church will observe the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is intimately connected with the Eucharist. On the same day, Pope Benedict XVI will open a special Year for Priests, coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the death of Saint John Mary Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests. This special year, which is meant to encourage priests to strive for spiritual perfection, will conclude one year from Friday.

If you love the Eucharist, if you cherish this great treasure which the Lord has left to his Church, pray for your priests, that we might grow daily in holiness and allow the Lord to mold our hearts ever more closely to his own. Pray that we will recognize more and more that "God is the only treasure which ultimately people desire to find in a priest." Pray, then, that we will be holy and bring the Eucharist to you with reverence and love, that we will allows keep our vows to the Lord in the presence of his people (cf. Psalm 116:18).

Pray, too, that more young men will hear the call of the Lord and take up the cup of salvation in his service. Pray that young men will open their hearts to the Lord, recognize his goodness toward them and respond with generous hearts.

Let each of us approach our Eucharistic Lord this day with humble trust, grateful all the good he has done for us.