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Annunciation Parish, Shumway, Illinois
10 June 2007

The Solemnity of *Corpus Christi* (C)

Having celebrated and reflected upon the central tenet of the Christian faith last Sunday, today Holy Mother Church proposes for our reflection that which is the "source and summit of the Christian life," the Holy Eucharist.¹

Notice in the Gospel proclaimed that Jesus first speaks to the crowd. Next he heals them of their illnesses. Finally, he feeds and satisfies them. The same is true for us today, and the movement is ever the same: first he teaches, second he heals, and third he feeds.

The Lord Jesus Christ speaks to us, he teaches us and calls us to himself. Within the depths of our hearts he calls to us, gently and quietly. There is something strangely attractive and compelling about his voice.

But hearing his voice we become conflicted within ourselves. On the one hand we want to listen this voice, this beautiful voice; yet, on the other, we somehow know that this voice will call us to put our plans and desires aside and to follow where he calls. We try - vainly - to ignore this voice that resonates within the depths of our heart, but he never stops calling us to heed him.

¹ *Lumen gentium*, 11.

When at last we do listen actively and intently, he begins to teach us in the ways of faith. He makes known to us the depth of our sin and the estrangement from God caused by sin. Jesus then teaches us to put our trust in him, to accept his gracious mercy and be reconciled with God.

This is why the Church asks us to come early for the Holy Eucharist, so that we might converse with the Lord and be taught "about the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:11). Jesus longs to speak to us and to show us the way to follow him, each in our own way. He desires to share the depth of his love with each of us. If we are to listen well, we must be still and attentive to this soothing voice. We must quiet ourselves because "silence is a language God can speak without being constantly interrupted because God is a mystery of incomprehensible love, and love speaks for itself."²

After teaching us, Jesus longs to heal us through the grace of the Sacraments. He will never force his healing upon us; rather, we must approach Christ, the divine physician, and ask him to lay his healing hands upon us.

Throughout the Scriptures sin is likened to an illness. What is the remedy of our disease if not the Sacraments

² Ilia Delio, *The Humility of God: A Franciscan Perspective* (Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 17.

entrusted by Christ to the Church?³ The purpose of all of the Sacraments is "the healing of men through a proper medicine" and because of this they are rightly called "sacred medicaments"⁴ by which the Lord heals us.

In the waters of Baptism we are cleansed of original sin and our relationship with God is restored. Through Confirmation we are strengthened with the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to faithfully follow Christ. Through the Holy Eucharist we are nourished spiritually and are united with Christ as our head.

There are some today who claim that the Church invents her Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist. We know this claim to be false for St. Paul clearly says he received the Eucharist from the Lord himself:

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

This is the first and earliest account of the Eucharist that we have, written even before the Gospels. Paul did not create it;

³ Cf. Saint Bonaventure, *The Breviloquium*, VI. In *The Works of Bonaventure*, Vol. II: *The Breviloquium*, Jose de Vinck, trans. (Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1693), 223-226.

⁴ *Ibid.*, VI.6.

the Lord himself entrusted it to him, just as Jesus entrusted it to the Twelve:

At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.⁵

Because the Eucharist is the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ, we must approach the altar of the Lord worthily out of humble respect for the majesty of the Lord and the greatness of the effects of this Sacrament.

Writing to correct abuses within the Liturgy at Corinth, Saint Paul admonished them in no uncertain terms:

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself (I Corinthians 11:27-29).

This is why we are to arrive early for the sacrifice of the Mass, so that in conversation with the Lord we might examine our lives and consider how faithfully we follow him.

If we find that we are guilty of grave sin, of mortal sin, we must not receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without sacramental confession, else we increase our sin and commit

⁵ *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 47.

sacrilege by greatly disrespecting the Body and Blood of the Lord himself. As in the Gospel, Jesus wants to heal us of our sins and he has given us the means to be healed in the sacraments if only we make use of them.

After teaching and healing us, Jesus desires to feed us with his very own Body and Blood so that we might have life (cf. John 6:53-57). In this way he will satisfy all of our deepest yearnings and desires because our hearts truly long for him. Through the Eucharist Christ changes us into himself and we become his Body, the Church, and he becomes our Head.

May Holy Mary, Our Lady of the Eucharist, intercede for us, that we might approach the altar of the Lord worthily to receive his precious Body and Blood. Amen.