

## **The Holy Eucharist: A Constant Reminder of God's Love for us all**

This weekend, we celebrate the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, or Corpus Christi Sunday. The feast dates back to the 12th century. Saint Juliana of Liege, an Augustinian who lived in present-day Belgium, is whom we have to thank for it. She was very talented and educated and was given the grace of absolute faith that the bread and wine presented at the Mass becomes the Real Presence of Jesus Christ. Until her time, the Body of Christ was not elevated after the Consecration. Her Eucharistic devotion became a movement that drove the desire of medieval Catholics to want to see the Body of Christ, so the elevation of the host began in Paris in 1220. Adoration became a regular practice as well.

Today, literally seeing the Eucharist certainly isn't a problem, at every Mass the host and the chalice are elevated. But as a whole, I think the challenge today is seeing the deeper meaning of the Eucharist.

Our catechism states that with respect to Holy Communion, this is the sacrament in which we "unite ourselves to Christ who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body." (1330). Uniting ourselves to Christ, the catechism goes on to say that "The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus. Indeed, the Lord said: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." (1391). Through this, sins are also removed, as the Eucharist cleanses us from sin (1393).

First, it's important to remember how much God loves us. God did not have to come to dwell among us and die for us; but He did, all out of love for us. Ponder that when you receive Communion - about how God loves you so very much, and how He gives us this sign of His love to help us on our journey through life in becoming better people. Turn your sins and struggles over to Him in your heart, and let Jesus free you from them. Know that no matter where you are at in life, God loves you - and He sees the inherent goodness in you, which is why He is with you in life every step of the way. The Eucharist is fuel for the journey through of life. Sometimes receiving Holy Communion can be rather mechanical, but it is such a special moment where God is choosing to dwell within us, giving Himself to us.

Secondly, as the name suggests, "Communion" is meant to bond us closer to one another. As we hear in this week's second reading, "we, though many, are one body." The catechism also tells us that the "Eucharist strengthens our charity" (1394). Communion is meant to unite us to one another, and as we reflect on receiving Holy Communion, we also need to ask ourselves how we grow in the fruits that we receive from the Eucharist. While we stand up for what we believe in and should speak our minds, do we try to listen to others and be tolerant with those who see things differently than we do, be it in politics, in the family, or at the parish or school? How do we reach out to those in our lives who may be hurting? How do we work on forgiveness? Do we look at others in our lives and see who may be spiritually hungry and then try to give them spiritual food with love and prayer? Do we look at the world with optimism and

hope, seeing good in people and try to help them, or just bemoan the world or judge others too harshly without trying to help them?

Indeed, there is so much involved in the Eucharist it's impossible to cover even the tip of the iceberg in a bulletin column. But, again, just think about that one word "you" the next time you're at Mass - ".given up for you." In Communion, Jesus gives up His body for you, and gives it to you to give you strength. But this is also meant to bring us closer to one another as the people of God too. It's such a wonderful gift, and my hope is we never take that for granted, and pass on the gift we have been given by growing in love for both our Lord and one another.

Have a blessed week,

Fr. Paul