

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ June 14, 2009

Readings: Exodus 24:3-8; Hebrews 9:11-15; Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

Come to be Fed

It's the time of year for graduation parties. I'm sure most of you have been to a couple. Last weekend I was at my sister's house for a celebration of her fifth child's graduation. She has only four more graduation parties to go. God bless her.

At the party, one of her friends, who I have come to know over the years, approached me looking for guidance and direction. She commented that she was struggling going to her church every week; that she wasn't getting anything out of the Mass anymore. The priest's homilies weren't relevant to her. She didn't like the music and the songs that were sung. While still attending Sunday Mass, she had started to also attend another Christian church that had a dynamic preacher and music she enjoyed. She felt like she was being fed there.

"But they don't have the Eucharist," I commented. "That is how we are truly fed." I didn't have all of my scripture memorized to recite, but we discussed what Jesus taught in the sixth chapter of John's gospel. Jesus said: "*Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him*" (John 6:53-56). She countered that the other church had a communion service, but after I pressed her, she agreed it was only symbolic; the bread and wine weren't turned into the Body and Blood of Christ at that other church. In today's gospel, we heard how Jesus instituted the Eucharist and gave the authority to consecrate to the apostles, the first priests.

We are such a society that looks for instant gratification, that we often come to Mass looking for entertainment or to get something that makes us feel happy. Yes, we should get something, but we also need to be prepared to give something. It's not a spectator sport. It would be nice if all of our priests and deacons could be dynamic preachers, but this is not necessarily the reason many of us were called to our vocations. Pray for us. It would be nice if all our Catholic churches could have beautiful music and congregations that would participate in the singing. And we have the opportunity with the many Catholic churches available in the area to shop around a little and find preaching and music that is more compatible with individual tastes. And I encouraged my friend to do this. But I also reminded her that this is not the reason why we come to Mass.

We come to give thanks and to give honor and praise to God. We come to be fed not only with the word of scripture, but also with the Eucharist, the Bread of Life. We come to commemorate Christ's Passover and re-present the sacrifice of the cross to the Father. Christ becomes present to us on the altar through the actions of the priest; that's something you don't get at any Protestant or non-denominational churches. We receive so much at Mass; our struggle is sometimes to try to comprehend it all and appreciate it. Our struggle is to offer our lives up in faith, united with the sacrifice of Christ.

The Eucharist is such a great gift, but it is also such a great mystery. If we come to

church on Sunday and just go through the motions without truly believing that Christ is made present on the altar, without truly believing that we receive His Body into our bodies, then we may become bored and not get anything out of Mass. So we need to stop and look at how we prepare to celebrate the liturgy of the Mass, what the Church calls the source and summit of Christian life. Is attending Mass on Sunday the source and summit of your life?

Is Mass simply an obligation for you; something you have to fit into your busy weekend schedule? Reflect on how much time you are willing to give back to a loving God who has given you so much all week long. Is attending Mass a chore, or something you anticipate and look forward to? If you truly believe in the miracle of the Eucharist, you should be knocking down the doors to get in and be inviting all your friends. Do you come to Mass with the proper disposition and attention, or are you pre-occupied with concerns and cares of your life. Come place those cares and concerns on the altar. Ask Jesus for help and assistance.

We come together on Sunday at Mass to ask forgiveness in the penitential rite. We come together to ask for Christ's intercession as we pray to the Lord in the Prayers of the Faithful. We come to give God honor and praise, and that does not require professional musicians; it requires a pure heart. We come to hear the Word of God in scriptures and have them broken open for us so that we can more easily digest their message; make sure you come to Mass hungry for the nourishment of that Word and not just looking for something that tastes good. But most of all, we come to receive the Bread of Life, Jesus Himself, to nourish us and sustain us as we are sent back out into the world to be His witnesses.

The Mass is a beautiful prayer, but we must actively participate. We are not simply patrons sitting in the audience waiting to be entertained by a good performance. We are part of the cast. We are members of the Body of Christ. Together we reenact the sacrifice of Christ to the Father. In faith, we become part of the mystery. And we can imagine God the Father looking down from above, and He is happy that we came.

Deacon Joe Hulway