

060610 Corpus Christi: The Real Body of Christ

This homily was delivered at a large BOY SCOUTS CAMP at a SUNDAY COMMUNION SERVICE in the north Central Rim Country mountains in Arizona. Deacon Tom Fox was the celebrant of this liturgy of Word and Eucharist. God bless our youth -- our hope.

I'm going to start with a little contest: No adults can participate. I'm going to ask you Scouts a question at the beginning of my homily and there will be a couple subtle clues during the homily. At the end, I'll ask who can answer.... one of you will get a prize if you know the correct answer. The question for the end of my homily is: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EUCHARIST AND THE BLESSED SACRAMENT? Here's the start of my homily...

On June 12th, 2004, I was ordained a deacon in the Catholic Church after four years of study at the deacon formation seminary in Denver. So, in just a few days, I will celebrate my 6th anniversary as a deacon. I remember that day so vividly -- It was one of the most powerful, holy and uplifting days of my life. I have a video that they recorded -- a professional job -- and I will watch the ordination ceremony again. But it isn't about my ordination that I want to talk this morning -- I want to share that the pastor in the parish I was assigned to in Colorado asked me to preach at the masses on that weekend that I was ordained. It was the same feast as what we celebrate today.

It's called the Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. Most of you wouldn't know it -- but there is an older name... a more traditional name for this feast... anyone have a clue? (_____) -- This used to be called Corpus Christi Sunday -- the words Corpus and Christi are Latin and they mean BODY OF CHRIST...

Catholics believe... our faith really believes that this bread isn't just bread -- it's truly the Body (& Blood) of Jesus Christ. Not a symbol... not just some sort of nice memorial -- but truly the same Body of Jesus as walked the earth 2,000 years ago. In the Church and in Church history, this Eucharist bread is often called manna. That word, manna came about because the Jews were fed with a bread-like substance in the desert a long time ago. Manna was recognized as a gift from God to keep the Jews alive as they journeyed through the desert. Well now -- as you, your parents and me - as all of us journey through life, we have the gift of the Eucharist to help us become better people... better scouts... and most important: better Catholic Christians.

In a book I was reading called The Hidden Manna -- I found a quote by St. John of Damascus. Who is he? He's one of the writers about what was happening in the early Church after Christ ascended back into Heaven.

St. John answers the critics who wonder how Christ can become associated with the Eucharist as a little wafer of bread. St. John reminds us of the question of the Blessed Virgin when she was told by the angel that she was to become the Mother of God. She said, "How shall this happen to me since I do not know man?" She meant that she wasn't married. And the Archangel Gabriel replied to Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." And that's how Mary became pregnant - through the power of the Spirit of God.

Now to those who ask you how the Eucharist is possible – how it becomes the Body and Blood of Christ... St. John says: "the Holy Spirit is present and does these things which surpass reason and thought."

I want you to have some sense of how important this is that we have this Body of Christ with us here today. Back in 2004 some months after my ordination, we went to Italy. It was so marvelous to go back to the roots -- the home of our faith. While in Rome - I went to the catacombs... the catacombs are where they buried the early Christians... many of them martyrs who were killed... often immediately killed for gathering just as you and I are gathering here today. They gathered to celebrate the Word of God... and to celebrate the Eucharistic bread - this manna that we have here today.

Not just a couple people died... not just hundreds... thousands of them died. Some died with the Eucharist still inside their bodies -
- they died giving witness to the truth of Jesus Christ and our faith.

Christians of all times have always honored Jesus in the Eucharist. Around the world, this is a day that many parishes and dioceses will hold special processions with the Blessed Sacrament. A consecrated larger host will be put inside of a display case and held up and processed around so people can look at it... honor it... pray to Jesus present there. Many blessings come from these Corpus Christi processions.

In closing, I'll mention one other book.... this is called No Wonder They Call It The Real Presence. It contains dozens of stories of lives changed by Christ in Adoration. One quote is from Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Do you remember her -- the little woman who started the order of nuns -- and they took care of the sick and homeless and dying people of Calcutta, India? Mother Teresa said, "When we come back from our work in the evening, we have one hour of adoration before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. and at this you will be surprised: We have not had to cut down our work for the poor to allow time for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The one hour of adoration is the greatest gift God could give a community because we love the poor with greater and deeper faith and love."

I urge you to prepare yourself... after I finish these closing words -- we'll have some time to think... to pray... to ask Jesus to truly come into our minds and hearts. Let's ask Jesus to make His will and wishes known for us. Let's ask His Mother Mary to pray for us and lead us to a more perfect union with Her Son.

CONTEST ANSWER???