

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) - The Cross Is the New Tree of Life and the Eucharist Is Its Fruit

June 6, 2021.

God's plan for the human family was disrupted by eating. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit from the tree of good and evil, they disobeyed God. That was original sin. By eating that fruit, they expressed and enacted their desire to live by their own standards, not by God's and that was a very bad idea. When the human family rebelled against the Creator and the source of all good things through original sin, we expelled ourselves from paradise and put ourselves at the mercy of evil. That's why the world is so full of misery, suffering, and crime. God's original plan was for us to eat of the tree of life to preserve us from death. But after original sin, death becomes our constant companion and our destination.

But if God's plan was disrupted by eating, it is also restored by eating. Since we could no longer eat of the tree of life in paradise, God brought the tree of life out to us. That was the mission of Jesus Christ. By dying on the cross, he repaired the damage done by original sin, suffering in our place and untying the knot of our disobedience. In this way, the cross of Jesus Christ became the new tree of life. And this tree is heavily laden with supernatural fruit: **the Eucharist, the body and blood of our Lord. When we eat of this fruit, we express our repentance and our desire to return from our rebellion, to be united to Christ.** It is our medicine, gradually healing our selfishness and sinfulness, and nourishing Christ-like generosity, wisdom, courage, and love. This is what we celebrate joyfully on this Sunday's **Solemn Feast of Corpus Christi, the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ**

In Germany, and I am sure in many countries too, the Feast of Corpus Christi is a regional holiday. It is a Catholic festival celebrated on the second Thursday after Whitsun (Pentecost Sunday). The Catholics celebrate this Feast with a beautiful and meaningful tradition with a solemn procession. During the procession, the Eucharist is carried in honour throughout the parish area. All the Catholics in the vicinity join the procession, which is like a religious parade, dressed in their finest clothes, carrying flowers and presents, singing and praying. Along the way they make four stops. Beautifully decorated altars are prepared ahead of time for each one of these stops. When the procession arrives, the monstrance with the Eucharist is placed upon the altar. Prayers are said, hymns are sung in adoration, and benediction is given. The procession also eloquently express the redemption of the fallen world, the healing of poisoned humanity, that is achieved through this most Blessed Sacrament. The four stops where the altars are set up are chosen carefully. Each one of them faces one of the four directions: north, south, east, and west. **And at each stop, the first verses from one of the four Gospels are read as representative of the entire Gospel symbolizing Christ's universal, saving presence, through his worldwide Church, which produces and lives by the Eucharist.**

Our Churches are far more than fellowship halls. They are not just places of prayers and hymns. Our Churches are **tabernacles of the Living God in the Eucharist.** We genuflect or bow when we see that little red light. I remember the first time I attended mass in the new St. Charles Church in NW Edmonton. I did not see the tabernacle. After mass, I explored and found it in the Reservation Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. There are two pillars at the entrance, on the right is an open bible, on the left are bottles with the sacramental oils blessed at the Chrism Mass in Holy Week. These two pillars at the chapel entrance reminded us of what **our faith is based on: the Word of God, and the Sacraments.** They lead us to the **tabernacle**, where the body and blood of Christ are kept under the form of bread. This is the chapel of devotion where members of the community come for personal prayers. While I was there, I saw Eucharistic Ministers taking Eucharist out and putting them in pics probably to bring communion to the homebound and those in hospitals and assisted living facilities.

I used to do that every Tuesday after the morning mass too before the stroke. One of my hospital clients, a wheelchair-bound continuing care patient used to wait for me at the hospital door to make sure he will not be missing out, and is ready to receive the Eucharist. When he saw me, he waved at me happily and I wheeled him back to his room. He, like me now, cannot talk and eat and is on tube-feed too. I and the dietitian spent a few weeks and work out a plan: to soften a small piece of the Eucharist in a small cup of water, then gave him the softened Eucharist in his mouth to dissolve and I consumed the water. He was very upset to start with because it was not the whole Eucharist but finally accepted it after I explained to him even a small piece of the Eucharist is still the body of Christ. **My dear friend reminds me of my diaconate mission to serve the hungry, the sick and the needy with joy.** As Pope Francis says *It is precisely the deacons who represent the face of the Church on a daily basis; they are a community that lives among the people.*"

When we receive the holy Eucharist in Communion, it is the redemption of the world through Christ's presence in each one of us. By making himself present in us, he heals and sanctifies us, but he also reaches out to heal and sanctify everyone around us, every part of the world that is connected to us. But this doesn't happen automatically. When we eat natural food, our bodies digest it and derive nourishment from it automatically, without our having to do anything consciously to make it happen. But since the Eucharist is supernatural and spiritual food, it will only nourish us if we allow it to, as my hospital friend did. One thing we can do to help activate the power of the Eucharist in our lives is to make use of the discipline of silence to calm our worries and what worries us at the moment. We can't put fine wine into a glass full of grapefruit juice until we pour out the grapefruit juice. **Silence helps us empty out the cup of our soul, so that it can receive God's grace in Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ. In silent prayer and reflection, God has a chance to speak to us, to till the soil of our hearts, and maybe to point out some unconfessed sins that are blocking the flow of his grace in our lives.**

Coming to Mass a few minutes early in order to recollect ourselves, staying in the Church a few minutes after Mass to extend our gratitude and thanksgiving, respecting the atmosphere of silence here inside the church both before and after Mass by reserving our conversations for the vestibule... these are practical ways to help make sure God doesn't spill his grace when he tries to pour it into our souls through the Eucharist. **Christ's cross is the tree of life for all people and all times, and the Eucharist is its eternal-life-giving fruit. Today, as we thank God for this awe-inspiring gift of the Eucharist, let's express our gratitude by promising to keep our cups ready to be filled, like my joyful hospital friend, even just to have a small piece.**

Grant us, almighty God, that we may be refreshed and nourished by the Sacrament which we have received, so as to be transformed into what we consume. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.