

- On Pentecost I mentioned that we receive the Holy Spirit's grace only in proportion to our readiness to receive it. You see, true holiness is never something we can gain on our own; we need God's help. Indeed, we need God Himself to work in us and through us.
- But God doesn't force Himself or His grace upon us. We must desire God and His grace, and we must invite Him in.
- So, there is a give and take to our redemption. God accomplished His redeeming work on Calvary. He redeemed us then and there. But we must willingly choose to cooperate with His saving grace. We must desire it, accept it, and try to cooperate with it.
- This is especially true when it comes to the Sacraments, which are the primary vehicle of God's grace. While the Sacraments confer grace independently of our actions, the effect of the graces will vary according to our disposition as we receive them.
- In other words, the more open and receptive we are to the graces of the Sacraments, the more that we desire those graces, the greater effect the Sacraments will have upon our souls!
- Yet if we are inattentive, slothful, hard of heart, tepid in our love for our Lord, or lukewarm in our faith about the power of the Sacraments, then the grace that we receive through them will be less effective.
- Today we celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi, which is a marvelous feast in honor of that sacrament we call the Most *Blessed* Sacrament. We call the Eucharist, the Body of Christ, the Most Blessed Sacrament for many reasons.
- While all of the Sacraments are encounters with Christ, the Eucharist *is* Christ: His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. Our blessed Lord is really and truly present in the Eucharist.
- As such, the Eucharist is the most perfect expression of God's love; it is the perfect sacrifice by which man is redeemed. Thus, there is an unrivaled power in the Eucharist, a power not only to save us, but to make us saints in the process.
- Just as a sculptor relies on a hammer and chisel to carve and shape his work of art, our Lord uses His own Body and Blood to fashion and shape us into masterpieces of holiness.
- And it's a very personal action of God's part. He is not simply a divine artist: He is a God who sacrifices His very self for us, for He knows that no other sacrifice will do.
- He is a God who gives us His very Body and Blood as food and drink so that we may live eternally. He is a loving father and great high priest who enters into a covenantal relationship with us.
- The Eucharist shows us that Christ's love is such that He would go to any lengths to help us achieve the end for which we have been created, which is eternal union with Him.
- So, there is tremendous power within the Eucharist: a power to heal us, restore us, redeem us, and thereby make us saints. How does this happen?
- The Body and Blood of Christ *heals* us by forgiving us our venial sins. Every time we receive Holy Communion worthily, our venial sins are forgiven.
- It also strengthens us so that we can overcome temptations, especially temptations to mortal sin. The more we receive Holy Communion worthily, the harder it becomes for us to commit mortal sin.
- The Body and Blood of Christ *restores* us by giving us an infusion of grace that helps us make the right moral choices. The Eucharist helps put us on the right track, and it strengthens the relationship we have with God and with one another.

- And we know that the Blood of Christ *redeems* us, for our Lord is very clear in the Gospel of John that whoever eats and drinks of the Body and Blood of Christ abides in Him and will have eternal life.
- Furthermore, frequent reception of the Body and Blood of Christ also nurtures within us a desire to live more charitably, more virtuously. So, worthy reception of the Body and Blood of Christ helps us to become holy – to become saints!
- The power to do all these things is not magic. It's simply the power of love: covenantal love.
- Through our baptism, all of us are called to a covenantal relationship with our Lord through the sacraments. At baptism God comes to dwell in our souls and brings with Him the gift of sanctifying grace. And at that moment, we promise to live for Him and to obey Him.
- And this covenantal relationship we have with our Lord is consummated and strengthened every time we receive Holy Communion worthily. In Holy Communion our Lord gives us Himself wholly and completely, just as a bridegroom gives himself fully to his bride.
- And through this gift of Himself, our Lord heals us, restores us, and redeems us by His grace. Through the gift of Himself, our Lord begins sculpting us into a work of art as His saints. But all of this depends, at least in part, on how we receive the Eucharist.
- We can receive the Lord daily, but if we are not receiving Him worthily, if we are not seeking to cooperate with His grace, then the awesome graces of the Eucharist are lost on us.
- So how do we receive the Body of Christ worthily so that we might cooperate with His grace?
- First, we must be in a state of grace. To receive our Lord with mortal sin on our soul is just about the worst sin a Catholic can commit. So, to receive our Lord worthily requires that we first stay in a state of grace. But it's not enough that we simply avoid mortal sin.
- Receiving the Eucharist worthily requires that we approach the altar rail with true reverence and devotion. This requires that we pray our way through the Mass, and approach the altar rail with gratitude, contrition, and recollection.
- We must be adorers of our Lord if we wish to receive Him worthily. That's one of the reasons why we've 40 Hours these past few days: to enable us to adore our Lord, and thereby deepen our relationship with Him.
- But even beyond our disposition at Mass, we must also strive to be wholly obedient to God's commands, most especially His command to love Him above all else and our neighbors as ourselves. We must strive to be generous with our temporal goods.
- And we must be willing to embrace our sufferings in this life with true abandonment of spirit and a desire to unite our sufferings to His.
- My dear friends, this is the feast of our redemption; today is our celebration of becoming the people God has eternally called us to be. For the Body of Christ, present to us in the Eucharist, is a primary means our Lord uses to make us saints and prepare us for Heaven.
- Knowing though that we can never presume upon God's grace, but that we must cooperate with it, let us seek to receive our Lord worthily and well: with gratitude, contrition, and reverence.
- And let us hope that by doing so, God's grace will indeed make us saints.