

- It's a glorious feast that we are celebrating this weekend in our parish: *Festum Sanctissimi Corporis Christi* – the Feast of the Most Holy Body of Christ.
- While in the Latin Mass this feast is properly celebrated on this Thursday past, as we did here at St. Ann's, there is a pastoral provision that allows us to celebrate it again today so as to ensure that all the faithful have a chance to participate in it.
- Moreover, I like to offer this external solemnity of Corpus Christi because I don't think we can possibly honor our Lord's Most Holy Body enough!
- I'm grateful to all of you who have spent some time in Adoration as part of our annual 40 Hours celebration these past 3 days, and who were part of our annual Eucharistic procession.
- Understand that these things that we do every summer when this beautiful feast rolls around are not hollow rituals or pious habits. *They mean something.* Indeed, our processions, our hours of Adoration are all acts of love for our Eucharistic Lord.
- They are acts of thanksgiving as well, by which we show God our gratitude for the generosity of His graces, poured so freely upon us especially through this, our most *blessed* Sacrament.
- And, I hope too, that by our loving gratitude which we pour forth in abundance on this feast every year, that we show contrition for our own sins and make reparation for those who are so unloving, so ungrateful to our Lord.
- For if we are going to love and thank our Lord for anything, should it not be for the Eucharist, which is the most precious gift He has given us? And thus, should we not also make reparation for those who fail to love and thank our Lord as they should?
- We may wonder why it's necessary to have a feast commemorating the Eucharist, since the Church already commemorates the institution of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday every year.
- Yet, because Holy Thursday also inaugurates our annual commemoration of the Lord's Passion, the full joy that we Catholics should embody for such a marvelous gift is very naturally suppressed on Holy Thursday. Thus, we have today's feast!
- Having this feast, separate from Holy Thursday, is a lesson from Holy Mother Church teaching us the great importance of the Eucharist. For it is not a bread merely laden with symbolism that we eat when we approach this altar.
- No, my brothers and sisters, it is really and truly the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is God Himself, come down from Heaven.
- Jesus Himself tells us today in the Gospel: "My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood, abides in me and I in him."
- In fact, in order to help us understand what it is that we receive in Holy Communion, the Church spells out for us Her whole theology of the Eucharist in the *Sequence* we just heard chanted. Dogmatic as it is poetic, its verses are food for both mind and soul.
- Truly, this Sequence is a marvelous text to meditate upon – especially in Adoration – for it reminds us in such magnificent language what It is that we venerate in the Eucharist.
- And this is something of which we never want to lose sight, for as Catholics, our relationship with the Eucharist is crucial to our salvation. It's not something to which we have the luxury of being indifferent.

- You'll notice that in the opening collect, we prayed for God to give us the grace to venerate the sacred mysteries of His Body and Blood so that we might always experience within ourselves the fruits of His redemption.
- In this prayer we're asking God to help us approach Holy Communion in such a way that we might draw from it our salvation!
- When we pray to venerate His Body and Blood correctly, we're not simply asking to be more pious. To venerate properly requires a certain disposition of mind and heart.
- Our will has to be actively engaged in the Mass, participating by uniting ourselves to Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, receiving Holy Communion reverently and worthily, and seeking to live a more just, virtuous, and devout life because we have received Christ.
- And then in our epistle from St. Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Letter to the Corinthians, we are admonished always to receive the Eucharist worthily, for *whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink of this chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.*
- *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself!*
- So, in other words, there's a lot riding on how we approach the altar rail and receive our Lord in Holy Communion. We can either come forward in love, with gratitude and contrition, and eat unto our salvation.
- Or we can come forward thoughtlessly, casually, or worse yet with grave sin on our soul, and eat unto our damnation.
- In her book, *The Way of Perfection*, St. Teresa of Ávila quipped of our Lord in Holy Communion that: "He pays well for His lodging if the hospitality is good!"
- In other words, if we receive our Lord well at the altar rail: with love, gratitude, and contrition, and if we're striving to live as every Catholic should, then our Lord unleashes beautiful graces within our souls.
- St. Teresa teaches us that, in the Eucharist, we receive sanctifying grace that puts us into contact with the Lord and enables us to do His will. In the Eucharist we encounter the unconditional love of God, which awakens our love for Him and our desire to serve Him.
- In the Eucharist we receive consolation and peace, most especially in life's difficult moments, and by receiving Holy Communion worthily we are transformed so that God becomes our highest priority and we are able to love others as we should.
- And occasionally, God heals us through our worthy reception of the Eucharist, and even performs miracles within us. Indeed, *He pays well for His lodging if the hospitality is good.*
- Brothers and sisters, we are celebrating this weekend the greatest gift God ever gave to this world of ours, and sadly, it is a gift that is either unknown or misunderstood by the vast majority of the world's inhabitants.
- To think: God's greatest gift is out of the reach of most men.
- Yet, it is not out of our reach. And so, we who are blessed to receive Holy Communion as often as we wish should take it upon ourselves to do so in a manner that is fitting so great a gift, i.e., with love, gratitude, and contrition.
- Indeed, may we always so venerate the sacred mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ so that we may ever experience within ourselves the fruits of His redemption.