

Reflection for the Feast of Corpus Christi

The Twelve approached Him and said, "Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provision; for we are in a deserted place here." He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves" (Luke 9:12-13)

This Sunday we celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. This Feast in the Roman Catholic Church is in honor of the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This Feast is celebrated on the Sunday or the Thursday after the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity.

Our Gospel reading this Sunday is commonly referred to as "*The Feeding of the Five Thousand*," and it is in this Gospel reading that we hear of "*The Twelve*," approaching Jesus and pointing out that the crowd of 5,000 men, not counting women and children, needed food and shelter. The Apostles suggested to Jesus that He should dismiss the crowd so that they could go and look for food and shelter. Jesus already knew what he is going to do, but before he feeds the 5,000 with the multiplication of the loaves and fish, He said to the Twelve, "*give them some food yourselves.*" It is with this statement that Jesus Christ invites His Apostles and all of His present and future followers to become part of the Mystical Body of Christ. It is at the Eucharist Table that we receive the real presence of Christ in the miracle of the Eucharist, where bread and wine becomes the body and blood of Christ.

The Corporal Works of the Church as a community and as individuals is the Mystical Body of Christ responding to Jesus' two thousand year old statement "*Give them some food yourselves.*" Jesus feeding the five thousand and the miracle on the Altar are the physical reality of God's love for us. This physical reality of God's love for us which is the source and summit of our Faith compels us as the Mystical Body of Christ to respond in a physical way. For two thousand years the Church has responded to Christ's giving of His Body and Blood by reaching out to the poor and needy. Soup Kitchens, Homeless Shelters, Orphanages and Hospitals, are a few of the many ways that the Church has responded to Jesus' invitation to "*Give them some food yourselves.*" It is as the Mystical Body of Christ that we are able to respond to Christ's invitation and His gift to us.

The Feast of Corpus Christi which originated in 1246 when Bishop Robert de Torote of Liege ordered that a Feast be celebrated in his diocese in honor of the Holy Eucharist providing the Church with an opportunity to remember Christ's gift to us and our invitation to respond to this gift. It was St. Juliana, Prioress of Mont Cornillon, who had prevailed on the Bishop of Liege to celebrate this Feast in his diocese. St. Juliana had visions since she was 16 that convinced her to work towards the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi. Her efforts came to fruition in the year 1246. In 1264 Pope Urban IV instituted the Solemnity of Corpus Christi as a Universal Feast of the Church, after the Eucharist Miracle of Orvieto. This miracle took place in 1263 when a German Priest by the name of Fr. Peter was celebrating Mass at a Church near Orvieto, when the Priest prayed the words of consecration, blood started to seep from the consecrated host. Pope Urban IV sent delegates to investigate and it was determined to be a Eucharist Miracle.

This Sunday at Mass as we receive our Lord, we are nourished by His Sacred Mystery, enlightened by our one Faith, and united in this bond of charity. As we allow this miraculous gift to transform us, may we reflect on how we in our actions and deeds can be a part of transforming the world, by sharing Christ with others through Corporal Works of Mercy. Allowing the Holy Eucharist to center us and strengthen us in our journey of faith.

In closing the Solemnity of Corpus Christi invites us to have a deep relationship with Christ through the Eucharist. We as a faith filled people are blessed to have a faith that is Eucharistic Centric. As we go forth from the celebration of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, may we keep the Eucharist as the center of our lives. May we embrace the opportunity for frequent reception of the Eucharist and may we pray before the Eucharist, the real presence of Jesus Christ. Once strengthened by our Lord may we go forth and be a light onto the nations, knowing that it is in our charity and love of others we share the truth and meaning of the Eucharist with all we encounter in our journey of Faith.