

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ – B  
Fr. Chad S. Green  
Holy Family Catholic Church  
Kirkland, Washington  
03 June 2018

Exodus 24:3-8  
Psalm 116  
Hebrew 9:11-15  
(John 6:51) Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

*The Eucharist: What Causes Us to Be Here*

There's a story, from a couple generations ago, that a man told about how he came to receive the Body and Blood of Christ.<sup>1</sup> When he was a young man, he was enjoying life – or so he thought. He was often out late partying with his friends into the early morning of the next day. Some days he would be just returning home from a long night out, while his neighbor across the street would be just leaving home for the day.

She was an older lady who, every morning at 5:00 a.m., would walk up the steep hill in their neighborhood to go to morning Mass at the church, before walking back down the hill to catch the bus to work. He and his friends would laugh at her, thinking they were the ones having a good time – just heading for bed – while she was up early trudging up that hill.

One night it was very cold and icy out. As he arrived back at his home, he joked to his friends, “Well, one thing's for sure. That old lady across the street won't be heading up that steep hill to church this morning.” Just as he said this, he looked out the window and could not believe what he saw. There, on her hands and knees, was that lady, crawling up the hill in the grass next to the icy sidewalk, making her way to Mass. As soon as he saw this, he stopped laughing. Instead of going to bed, he made a pot of coffee and sat up in the kitchen thinking things over...

A couple hours later, he got up, walked up the hill to the church, knocked on the priest's door, and asked: “Father, I gotta know. What do you have, there in that church, that would cause an old lady to get on her hands and knees and crawl up that hill in the cold and icy grass to be there this morning at 5:00 a.m.?”

The priest's answer to that question was the beginning of a new life for that man. It was a moment in which he received the grace that inspired him to learn about the Eucharist; to become Catholic himself, so that he, too, could receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

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That man's question is the same question that could be asked this morning here at Holy Family Church: "What do we have, here in this church, that would cause you to be here today?":

- ...that would cause you to make time in your busy schedule each week?
- ...to set aside all your other plans?
- ...to miss watching the game on TV?
- ...or being out enjoying the beautiful summer(-ish) morning?
- ...to get yourself out of bed early?
- ...to wrestle with the kids to get them ready to go?

If each of us were to answer that question, we'd hear a variety of answers for what causes each of us to be here this morning...

But behind all these different answers there lies really only *one* answer. What do we have, here in this church, that would cause us all to be here today? The only real answer is: the Eucharist – the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

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Since the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Church has celebrated this annual Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (also known as *Corpus Christi*), in order to strengthen our faith in the Eucharist; to strengthen our memory that the Eucharist – truly the Body and Blood of Christ – is that which gathers us together, every Sunday and every day of the week when we come to church to celebrate Mass.<sup>2</sup>

This annual solemnity is a help to us because, as human beings, we tend to forget things, don't we? Life gets busy, or it gets hard. Sometimes we get overwhelmed by busyness, difficulties, pain or suffering, strained relationships – and we forget to turn to God for His help.

And sometimes life is going so well that we forget that we need God's help.<sup>3</sup> Either way, it's easy to forget all the ways that God has been guiding and loving us. It's easy to forget that God is always with us – in good times and in not-so-good times.<sup>4</sup> But is the reverse true? Are we always with God?

Last Sunday, on Trinity Sunday, I preached about the God's desire to keep us always in communion with Him. The Eucharist is the prime example of God's desire to be with us.<sup>5</sup> Jesus desires so much to be with us, that He comes down from Heaven to be with us in the Eucharist<sup>6</sup> – to feed us, heal us, nourish us, and strengthen us on our journey to be with Him always in Heaven.

The Eucharist is different from regular food because, rather than nourish us for this life, it nourishes us for eternal life. When we consume regular food, it becomes part of our body and give us energy to make it through each day. Eventually, no matter how much regular food we consume, we will all die. However, when we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, it does not merely become part of us. Rather, when we receive the Eucharist, we are conformed to Christ.<sup>7</sup> We remain in Him; He remains in us; and we have eternal life because of the redemption He won for us through His Sacrifice on the Cross.<sup>8</sup>

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My friends, today is our reminder that Jesus is with us in the Eucharist – not just on Sundays – not just at Mass – but, here at Holy Family, Jesus is with us all day, every day, in our Blessed Sacrament Chapel. He is available to us, waiting for us to be with Him. In a few moments, I will invite our parishioner, Luke Walters, to share his testimony of how regularly spending time in Adoration in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel has changed his life – how Adoration has conformed his life more and more to Christ's.

If you are already someone who regularly comes to Adoration, today's solemnity is your time to recommit; to remember and to reflect on how Adoration has blessed you and conformed your life to Christ's; and to share that testimony with your family and friends.

If you've been thinking about spending time in Adoration, have been meaning to stop in more regularly, or aren't really sure what Adoration is, today's solemnity is your opportunity to learn about it and to give it a shot. To find out what we got here in that chapel that makes many people just like you commit to come for one hour of prayer each week; that makes many people just like you come at all times of the day, late at night, and early in the morning to be with Jesus.

Before you leave church today, please stop by the table in the East Narthex to find out more about what Jesus can do for your life if you regularly spend time with Him in Adoration, and to consider giving it a shot by committing to being with Him for one hour each week.

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Rick Arkfeld, *Journey People: Eucharist*, 09'30" – 11'30". (Audio CD: St. Joseph Radio, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Francis Mershman, "Feast of Corpus Christi" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1908);

Urban IV, *Transiturus*, Papal Bull (1264): "We should celebrate continuously the memory of this memorial, because the more frequently his gift and favor are looked upon, so much the more firmly are they kept in memory. Therefore, although this memorial Sacrament is frequented in the daily solemnities of the Mass, we nevertheless think suitable and worthy that, at least once a year – especially to confound the lack of faith and the infamy of heretics – a more solemn and honorable memory of this Sacrament be held."

<sup>3</sup> See Proverbs 30:7-9:

"Two things I ask of you,  
do not deny them to me before I die:  
Put falsehood and lying far from me,  
give me neither poverty nor riches;  
provide me only with the food I need;  
Lest, being full, I deny you,  
saying, 'Who is the LORD?'  
Or, being in want, I steal,  
and profane the name of my God."

<sup>4</sup> See Matthew 28:20: "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

<sup>5</sup> See *Lumen Gentium* 11: "...the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life..."; also *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 1324ff

<sup>6</sup> John 6:51

<sup>7</sup> CCC 1392

Urban IV: "Eating wounded us, and eating healed us. Thus the Saviour says, My Flesh is real food. This bread is taken but truly not consumed, because it is not transformed into the eater. Rather, if it is worthily received, the recipient is conformed to it."

<sup>8</sup> CCC 1391-1393