

HOMILY ~ CORPUS CHRISTI

THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

JUNE 1/2, 2024

How many of you remember your First Communion? Even though most of us were only seven at the time, most of us remember it very well. Part of the reason why we remember it is because we got special clothes, special prayer books and rosaries, and had a party. As I remember my First Communion, it definitely had a spiritual component to it as well. I felt different spiritually after my First Communion, and I felt the presence of God with me in a new way. I can still remember what the feeling was like. I had changed spiritually.

I also had a profound experience with Eucharistic Adoration as a child. I was probably about 3rd or 4th grade. It was Holy Thursday; and in my parish, we had Eucharistic Adoration all night. We were assigned a time to go based upon our last name. My last name beginning with "M" made my time in the middle of the night. I remember my father waking me up in the middle of the night, getting dressed and going to church. When I walked into church, saw the altar of repose and all of the candles, I could feel the presence of Jesus physically. I can still remember what that felt like. I had changed spiritually. Both my First Communion and Eucharistic Adoration were experiences of the transcendent for me. I have had a number of these experiences as an adult as well.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi, or the Body of Christ. I think the most important words ever spoken were, "*This is my body. This is my blood.*" The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus meant what he said at the Last Supper. Jesus did not say, "*This is symbolic of my body. This is symbolic of my blood.*" He said, "*This is my body. This is my blood.*" When we eat his body and drink his blood, he becomes part of us physically. We become what we receive. We are living tabernacles when we leave the church carrying Jesus within us. That is how much Jesus loves us. That is how close Jesus wants to be to us. He wants to be part of us.

Over the years, the Church has painstakingly tried to explain this rationally. They have used ancient Greek philosophy and outlined the doctrine of transubstantiation, but the fact that the bread and wine

becomes the body and blood of Christ cannot be totally explained logically. It is transcendent. It is beyond our understanding. This is profound. When was the last time you thought or prayed about this? When we receive the Eucharist regularly, it can become routine. I believe in the real presence not because of a logical explanation but because of the transcendent experiences I have had in connection with the Eucharist. I do not have a transcendent experience every time I receive the Eucharist or every time I participate in Eucharistic Adoration, but the experiences I have had have changed me spiritually.

I would define a transcendent experience as a spiritual experience that takes you out of yourself and convinces you that there is something bigger than yourself. It is where you find God. We can have these experiences in connection with the Eucharist and with observing nature: a sunrise or sunset, the Grand Canyon, the Northern Lights. To have these experiences, you have to be open to them. First, we have to admit that we do not have everything figured out. We have to admit that because we cannot explain something does not mean that it does not exist. Maybe children are more open to these experiences because they know they do not have it all figured out. We must be mindful of the here and now. If we are ruminating about the past, or planning for the future or just distracted, we will miss it. I think I have missed some of these experiences with nature because I was preoccupied with getting pictures and not truly entering into the experience. We also must be quiet, and this includes all of the talking we do silently to ourselves most of the time. Quiet that inner voice.

If we are going to have a transcendent experience during Adoration, we need to come. We have Adoration here at St. Edith every Tuesday after the 9:00 AM Mass until Benediction at 5:30 PM. We have to be open to our environment and observe without judgment. We need to be curious about what we see and experience. If we approach the Eucharist or nature with specific preconceived expectations, you will miss the transcendent. Do you want to have a transcendent experience? Approach the world with wonder.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim