

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Homily June 23, 2019 Celebration of Corpus Christi

Fr. Anthony Ram—Amen, I believe!

Readings

First reading: Genesis 14:18-20

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 110: 1, 2, 3, 4

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Gospel: Luke 9:11B-17

Today the Catholic church celebrates the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. One of the most important feasts. Talking about the Eucharist St. Chrysostom says every time the priest stands to celebrate the Mass, the multitude of angels are surrounding him. As the Eucharist goes on, there will be powers of heaven, holy angels in the sanctuary and around the sanctuary in honor of the One who is present at the altar. It is not just people. The holy angels and the powers of heaven stand every time the eucharist is celebrated.

Dear brothers and sisters often time this feast was connected to the one we celebrate on Holy Thursday—the priesthood day. But this feast was not that old. The Eucharist was celebrated and honored all the time from the time of Jesus every Sabbath day every time people gather the Eucharist was celebrated and honored. But this feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ was a later addition.

In the early thirteenth century, an Augustinian nun named Julianna, from her childhood she had tremendous reverence for the Eucharist. When she was a nun often times in her vision, she would see a big white moon. And as she was looking at the moon there would be a black spot. She would not understand this. After many times, she heard a voice, “this black spot is because like a moon, you have a wonderful celebration of the liturgical year, that black spot represents the lack of the Solemnity of the Body

and Blood of Christ—in the early thirteenth century. Then she spoke to her spiritual director. And that spiritual director became a bishop and when he became a bishop, he called the diocese —It’s very important to have a feast for the most important thing that Jesus has given—his body and blood. So, the diocese celebrated it in the year 1236. Later he became pope, and he took the name Urban the fourth. When he became pope, he wanted to spread reverence to the Eucharist about this feast. But there was a big miracle that took place. *[It’ll take a long time to explain, so I am not going to explain about that.]* After this big miracle he called a synod of all the bishops and cardinals where he solemnly declared in 1264 that the whole Catholic church everywhere in the world should celebrate a feast for the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ on the Thursday after the feast of the Holy Trinity, which we had last Sunday. But in many countries, it is usually celebrated on the Sunday after the feast of the Holy Trinity. That’s what we are doing today.

So today more than preaching about the Gospel, I want to share my view, my points, and my meditations about the Eucharist—just three points. The first one, what is the Eucharist? What happens when we receive the Eucharist and how we need to receive the Eucharist.

What is Eucharist? Is it simply a bread and wine? It’s truly the body and blood of Christ!

There is no doubt about it! When Jesus gave it, he said, “This is *my* body, *my* blood.”

Just to give a difference, when Moses was talking to God he said, “God, let me see your glory.” And this is what Yahweh said in the book of Exodus: “No one can see me and live. If you see me you will die. That is how powerful I am!” And he shows the glory of God, just passing by. Moses looks at the back of the glory of God. When he goes down the mountain, the people had to cover their faces because they were not able to see the face of Moses who saw a glimpse of God. And how could we ever see God? Jesus was so loving and wonderful. He made himself available in bread and in wine because if we truly see him as he is, we would die. He took on flesh, he is with us in bread and wine. In the book of first Samuel, Chapter 6 the Arc of the Covenant was taken. People walked for a certain distance they would keep the Arc of the covenant, the Holy of Holies in those days or the people of Israel. The three things in the Arc of the Covenant—the ten commandments, Aaron’s staff and manna. These are the miracles that God worked. They used to carry them with them all the time. And this was considered as the presence of God. When this was taken, it would be placed on a rock. When they were sleeping, people of Beth Shemesh came and wanted to see what was in the Arc of the Covenant. The seventy people who looked, into the Arc of the Covenant—*what happened?* —they all fell dead.

And in second Samuel we have another wonderful example. When the Arc of the Covenant was taken, it was about to fall, it was tilting. And there was a person standing next to the Arc of the Covenant, he wanted to hold it. His name was Uzzah. What happened? He fell down and died. That is the power of God! If the Arc of the Covenant had such power—manna, Aaron’s staff, and the ten commandments—

then how much more powerful the Eucharist should be. Do we ever realize this?

I used to invite my friends for Masses once in a while, especially for weddings and celebrations. They are non-Christians—mostly Hindus. One of my friends asked,

“What is that you distribute to your people?”

I said, “The Body of Christ.”
He said truly, really? Is that the Body of Christ? The one whom you call God? The One you call your Savior? The One who is the creator of this universe?”

I said, “What happened?”

“When your people come to receive that God that creator that savior—I don’t see the reverence in your people. They were talking, some chewing gum, some wishing each other. They are coming forward as if they are coming forward to receive a cracker.”

Nowadays we are losing the reverence for the Holy Eucharist dear brothers and sisters. And he added, “If I ever believe he’s truly God my savior, my creator, from the time I come to the church, my whole focus will be on the altar. I cannot take my eyes away from the Eucharist. Because he is the source of my life. And when I come to receive Him in my hand, God, Savior I will be trembling in fear and reverence. But I don’t see that in your church, in your people. And still you claim, he is your God, your savior your creator—all powerful.”

Dear brothers and sisters, this is one of the reasons the Church instituted this feast. Let us remember, know and believe who he is.

And second, what happens when we receive? Jesus himself said, “I am the Bread that came down from heaven and everyone who receives me will have eternal life.” And people left. Who

can eat his flesh? Who can drink his blood? This is a very hard saying. And Jesus should have said, "I don't really mean that! It's a figure of speech. It's an example." But Jesus did not say that. All the more he stressed and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you will not have eternal life. The only way you can have eternal life is to eat my flesh and drink my blood. There's no other way. All left him. Then he looked at the apostles and said, "Do you also want to leave? Fine." The truth is this, this bread is my body, this wine is my blood even if you do not believe me, it doesn't matter, this is the truth. If you receive me you will receive eternal life.

And the third point here my brothers and sisters, in St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians he says, "Before you received the body and blood of Christ examine yourself. Examine yourself. If you receive the body and blood of Christ in an unworthy manner, unprepared, unknowingly you are bringing condemnation on yourself. Very important point for all of us. Examine ourselves and receive Him in a worthy way.

In the year 1958, on February the second, a Chinese archbishop named Domenic Tang was imprisoned because he was celebrating Mass—because he was loyal to Rome and he was preaching Christianity. For these reasons he was imprisoned for twenty-two years. For the first five years he was in a solitary cell—no window. For five years he had not seen the sunlight. After five years he was brought out and said, "Domenic you have a few hours left, do whatever you want. If you want to call your family, call. If you want to have a nice meal, we will provide it. You have not had a bath in five years; you must be smelling! You want to have a bath; we will provide everything whatever you want. *You know what he did?* He knelt down and pleaded with them, "Allow me to celebrate Mass." He knows the value of the Eucharist. He

knows the value of Jesus Christ who is present. For five years, in spite of all the struggle, what he wanted was the Eucharist.

This is what mother Theresa used to say, "All my people celebrate every Mass as if it is your *first* Mass. Remember the first time when we received first Holy Communion? How excited we were. Celebrate every Mass as if it were your *last* Mass. As if you have no other chance. The *only* Mass.

Dear brothers and sisters, there is nothing greater than the Eucharist here on earth. Maximillian used to say, If the angels were to be jealous of man—are angels jealous of man? No—but he says if angels were to be jealous of man, it would be because of the Eucharist. Angels can see Jesus, adore Jesus, worship Jesus but never receive Jesus. We have the greatest privilege, the greatest gift, if we receive it in a worthy way. Jesus comes and stays with us. If Jesus comes and stays with us, we have nothing to worry about. But are we receiving him in a worthy way; in good preparation? If we receive Jesus in a worthy way, he will be with us and he will guide us.