

CORPUS CHRISTI (Year C)
6-22-2025 Homily

I. Introduction

When China was taken over by Communists in 1949, some Catholic religious sisters were imprisoned for their faith. Their guards ordered them not to pray, and to mock them, they often asked, “Now where is your Jesus?” An elderly Chinese woman, who was unsuspected of being Catholic, went to a priest in hiding and offered to take Communion to the sisters in prison. Wrapping the Hosts in a handkerchief, she went to the prison and screamed insults at the nuns; then she asked the guards if she might be let into the cell where they were so as to insult them face to face. The guards were only too happy to allow this, so the woman went up to the Sisters and shouted all sorts of abuse at them—and then whispered, “I’ve brought you Holy Communion,” and secretly passed the handkerchief to one of the nuns. The woman then left, still shouting and screaming, and promising to return again for the same purpose. Thus, the guards’ question—“Where is your Jesus?”—was answered: He was in prison with His followers (Msgr. Arthur Tonne, *Stories for Sermons*, Vol. 10, #69).

The imprisoned Sisters received Christ in the Eucharist and carried Him in their hearts. Jesus is with all His people in their time of need, but we must be faithful to Him—living out our faith, receiving Holy Communion with reverence, and recognizing Christ’s Presence in others. If people ask, “Where is your Jesus?” we should be able to point not only to the tabernacle here in church, but also to our hearts.

II. Development

Each year the Church celebrates this great feast of Corpus Christi—Latin for “the Body of Christ”—as a reminder to us that we must not take this amazing Gift for granted. Today’s readings bring out three themes central to the Eucharist: hospitality, gathering in the Name of the Lord, and showing concern for the needs of others. The 1st Reading from the Book of Genesis presents the theme of hospitality: Melchizedek, king of the ancient city of Salem, welcomed Abraham (who was then known as Abram); he brought out bread and wine for his guest and blessed him—and by doing this, he was also welcoming God Himself. We must be hospitable in the same way: when others come to us, God is present in them, and we should receive them with respect. This is especially true when Christ comes to us in the Eucharist; we must welcome Him and receive Him reverently and gratefully.

The 2nd Reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians highlights the idea of gathering in the Name of the Lord. St. Paul describes Jesus’ actions at the Last Supper, including His command to “do this in memory of Me.” We can’t celebrate the Eucharist on our own; we need to gather as a community of faith. That’s why we come here to Mass, and take Hosts consecrated here at Mass to the sick who are unable to be here. Gathering here in church for the Eucharist is central to our faith; it strengthens us and praises God—for Paul says that every time we share the Eucharist we proclaim Christ’s sacrificial and saving death.

Today’s Gospel passage illustrates the theme of showing concern for the needs of others. Jesus had spent time teaching the people about the reign of God. If, when finished, He had told them, “Now go away and take care of yourselves; you’re on your own,” His message

would have been contradicted by His actions. Instead, Jesus fed the crowd. He showed genuine concern for others—and so must we. Obviously we can't personally multiply food in a miraculous manner as He did, but we can place our trust completely in Him, and humbly allow Him to work through us—and in this way great, wonderful, and sometimes even miraculous things can occur. If we are true disciples, we can't come here together for sincere worship and then go our separate ways, ignoring the needs of those around us; if our faith is real, we'll put it into practice—probably not in a miraculous and dramatic way, as Jesus did, but in the routine, everyday, but still important opportunities life provides.

III. Conclusion

Our 2nd graders made their First Communions early in May, and I asked some of them to share what the experience of receiving Jesus was like. Lia wrote, "I was a little nervous at first, but when I received Him I felt joy and love; [I felt I was] holy, special, and happy." Olivia said, "I felt God entered me spiritually," and Carmine added, "Receiving Communion for the first time made me feel good, happy, and closer to God. . . . I am excited to be able to get [Communion] at Mass now." In explaining how good he felt in making his First Communion, Dylan put the word "very" in front of "good"—not just once, but six times. Adriana admitted she was nervous at first, but afterwards felt happy and refreshed. According to Richard, "When I took my First Communion, I felt more holy . . . and I was excited to come to church the next day and receive Communion again." Two of the boys in the class have the same first name. Jaiden #1 wrote, "I will always remember this special day. Making my First Holy Communion meant a lot to me because after waiting so long, I finally got to receive the Body of Christ. From now on, starting tomorrow, when I go to church I no longer have to cross my arms in the shape of an X [and receive a blessing] when it's time to receive Communion." Jayden #2, in speaking of the First Communion rehearsal, said, "At practice it was just bread and wine, but today it was the Body and Blood of Jesus. And it tasted so much better than [what] we had for practice. I felt so special because I felt like Jesus was with me. I am even more excited to go to church now because I can receive the Body of Christ and feel even closer to Jesus." Quinn wrote that she felt not only special and very close to God, but felt loved so much it was like being a queen. Jia noted, "I would say to anyone getting the Eucharist that it is a great experience and made me feel blessed and loved," and then she added that when she went home for additional photographs, she sat on her horse and in the process got her First Communion dress dirty. Finally, Addy said, "I felt closer to God [than ever] before; I felt like God was taking me up to Heaven."

These are all wonderful ways of answering the question "Where is your Jesus?" This is also a question each one of us must continue answering in our own lives. Jesus is here when we gather to worship in faith. He's in the arms we use to hold a person grieving over the death of a loved one. He's in the helping hand we lend to a person in need. He's in the sacrifices we make to support our parish or various worthwhile charities. He's in the reverence with which we receive the Holy Eucharist. He's in the silence when we pray for guidance and when we intercede for those in need of our prayers. He's in the anonymous favor or good deed we do to cheer up someone who's been depressed. He's in the words of love we speak to a family member or friend. And, most importantly, He's in our hearts when we try to live out our faith. Each one of us is called to welcome Jesus into our hearts and lives and to be a source of His Presence for others. May Our Lord be pleased in our humble and sincere efforts to do this.