

**Homily for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good that we are here today to offer thanks and praise to our Lord in this Holy Mass as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ.

On the 8th of September 1264, Pope Urban IV published decree, known as a papal bull, initiating the universal observance of this great feast which celebrates our love for Our Savior in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Since then the pious observance of this solemnity has evolved and for many years has been marked by the celebration of Mass followed by a Eucharistic procession much like our celebration here today.

In recent years I have had a number people ask me about this tradition of the Eucharistic procession on Corpus Christi and whether it is important for us to continue it today. While to some, this devout practice may seem to be an old tradition that is a holdover from yesteryear, something that we do because that is what our grandparents and parents

did. I would maintain that this celebration in which we bear public witness to our faith and devotion to our Lord present in the most Blessed Sacrament is a crucial aspect of our liturgical year. For our Lord's presence in the Eucharist is not only the source and summit of our faith in which we experience God's love for us, it is the spiritual food that fortifies us so that we might live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

Blessed Pope Paul VI explained the point of our public piety in taking the Blessed Sacrament out from the church into the streets, saying that the Church desires

to dispel the mysterious silence that surrounds the Eucharist, and to emit a triumphant cry that bursts through the walls of sanctuaries and overwhelms the streets of cities so as to infuse the whole human community with joy at the presence of Christ.¹

In our Gospel today, we hear the climax of the well-known Bread of Life Discourse, in which our Lord tells those who had gathered to hear Him while teaching in the Synagogue in Capernaum:

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.²

In these words from the gospel of Saint John, our Lord lays out the fundamental understanding of the Eucharist as true food and true drink. However, he does not stop with telling us that the Eucharist will be the sustenance for our spiritual lives, rather he goes on to explain the divine relationship that is formed by those who receive Him in the Most Holy Eucharist, namely, that we remain in a relationship with Christ and, in turn, He remains in relationship with us.

My dear brothers and sisters, given this understanding of our relationship with God and the love that we share with Him, we are called to bear witness to that love in our daily lives through living as true Christian disciples and sharing that love with those whom we encounter.

To help understand what it means to live as a true Christian disciple, imagine that you are standing at the edge of a lake skipping stones on the water. What happens as you pick up that stone and throw it toward the water? It hits the water and forms a ring that turns into another ring; but it doesn't stop there, as it skips across the water it does this again and again, forming many rings that spread out from where it made contact. This is how we ought to view our duty to be disciples of Jesus Christ:

strengthened in our faith and love of God by our reception of the Eucharist, Jesus calls us to share that love with those around us. Then, when we bear witness to Christ as the center of our lives by our actions, we will influence those around us to live in a similar manner. Eventually, that reach will grow as they too live Christ-centered lives, and so on. In doing so, we will help to build up the kingdom of God as more and more people are inspired to live their lives focused on the love of Christ as His disciples.

This is the life that the Lord invites us constantly to live. By receiving the Body and Blood of Christ into our hearts we can then bring the living Lord into this world in three ways. The first manifestation of Christ in our lives is our human presence to others. To be present to others is a simple and powerful act of self-giving. To be present to others in an attentive and kindly manner is to allow the grace of the Lord to be there at work in the world.

The second manifestation of Christ is in our speaking. Whenever our words are kind and thoughtful, patient and understanding, then the word of God is alive and active through us. People's lives are nourished by the words they hear from us.

The third gift of Christ to the world comes through the sharing of love and affection, kindness and consideration. Members of the Lord's family, his brothers and sisters, live by this spirit.

St. Josemaría Escrivá, in his book, *Christ is passing by*, wrote:

The Corpus Christi procession makes Christ present in towns and cities throughout the world. But His presence cannot be limited to only one day, like a sound you hear and then forget. It should remind us that we have to discover our Lord in our ordinary everyday activities. Side by side with this solemn procession there is the simple silent procession of the ordinary life of each Christian. . . . Let us ask our Lord, then, to make us souls devoted to the Blessed Eucharist, so that our relationship with Him brings forth joy and serenity and a desire for justice. In this way we will make it easier for others to recognize Christ; we will put Christ at the center of all human activities.³

So, today, as we join together in observing this beautiful tradition of the Church through which we bear witness to our faith and love of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, may we also be mindful of always bearing witness to our love of Christ in our daily lives by living as true disciples of our Risen Lord.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Paul VI, Homily, August 11, 1964.

² John 6: 53-56

³ Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is passing by*, p. 156.