

CORPUS CHRISTI A

Deuteronomy 8:2-3,14-16; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6:51-59

It's so wonderful that we've come together again today, on this Solemnity of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am so happy to see many familiar faces and hear happy voices.

During the locked-down, the church was like a desert. When we hear the word, images of a wasteland, dryness, emptiness, hunger and thirst fill our mind. Nothing stings quite like the desert.

I remember standing in the midst of the Sinai desert at high noon overlooking wide-open plains and high-sand dunes. It was so hot. I felt as if I was being boiled in a great caldron. My mouth was so dry, my head was ready to burst, and my feet burnt beneath me. Being in that desert was a life-threatening experience with no escaping the relentless heat and no relief to be found.

Today's first reading from Deuteronomy tells us about the Israelites in the desert and how God took care of them, fed them, gave them drink, protected them. God provided them and cared for them in every way.

"Remember how for forty years now the LORD, your God, has directed all your journeying in the desert," Moses reminded God's people. "Do not forget the LORD, your God ... who guided you through the vast and terrible desert; who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock and fed you in the desert with manna." God's chosen people in the desert are symbolic of you and me here and now. We were in the desert isolated, tested, molded, and strengthened by God.

During the last three months facing the world's health crisis, our lives experienced desert times. Yet during this time, God was (and still is) with us, directing us along his paths, feeding us, advising us, encouraging us, protecting us, comforting us and yes, also letting us experience hardships. God is letting us be tried and tested in many ways to see how serious we really are in wanting the Lord to be our God.

Today, we come together again. For some of us, it is the first time since the locked down in March. We are so happy and grateful to be

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together this day, to be able to celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, “Corpus Christi”. We are asked to believe some pretty incredible things about what happens at this altar - things we will never be able to fully understand. And that’s ok. We shouldn’t shy away from our wonder or any other kind of “disconnect” in our hearts and minds. It’s precisely in the “wondering” that we can come to a deeper understanding, a deeper love and appreciation, deeper faith.

“I’ve been following Mass live-streamed. But I really missed the Eucharist,” a parishioner recently shared. I can’t express the deep hunger in my soul for God.”

Indeed, at the center of the life of the Church is Jesus in the Eucharist. He is her foundation. He is her heart and soul and reason for being.

And because of this truth, it also means that one particular act of faith lies at the heart of who we are, members of Christ’s Body.

St. Paul reminds of that in the Second reading, saying, “... Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”

Here, St. Paul is talking about the Eucharist, the Most Holy Sacrament, the Body and Blood of our Lord which we receive from this holy table, week after week – a sacred meal shared day after day, in every corner of the world. He is telling us we are all in this together – the good and the bad, the rich and the poor, the not-so-young and the young, the saint and the sinner.

So, look to your left and to your right. Look in front of you and behind you. This is your family. This is our family – a family of faith - and hopefully a family of love and mercy and kindness and generosity.

These are the people this holy banquet is challenging us to unite ourselves to. These are the people God is asking us to share a mission and purpose with.

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These are the people with whom God is asking us to be a force for good in the world.

Dear Sisters Brothers in Christ:

The Body of Christ is not something we just receive from the altar of God. The Body of Christ is someone we become through the goodness of God, the sacrifice of his Son, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is what the Eucharist truly is. This is who and whose we really are, the people of God, the people of Eucharist.

May we become very aware of what it is we are partaking whenever we celebrate the Holy Mass. It is only by becoming like Christ who comes to us in a very special way in Holy Communion that we may obtain the fulfillment of earthly life and the joy of heaven.

“This is the bread that came down from heaven ... whoever eats this bread will live forever.” Amen.

Fr. Khanh