

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, as we celebrate the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, the Most Holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we celebrate this day, the Church calls us to remember again the great gift that the Eucharist is. Remember, this is not simply bread and wine that we eat and drink, nor is it merely a unifying ritual in which we partake. No, this is a *transcendental, mystical* reality. I am purposely using big words to get our attention about the depths of this mystery! When we come to Mass, all heaven is *really* present. All the angels and saints are here. And more, Almighty God is present in a way that is different and in a way “*par excellence*” over His other ways of being present in the world. He is really, sacramentally present in the Eucharist. It is Jesus’ whole self, His whole humanity – Body, Blood and Soul – and His whole Divinity. He is all right here in the Eucharist. At the words of consecration (“THIS IS MY BODY.... THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD”), the bread and wine go out of existence, and now the only thing present there is Jesus – fully God and fully man. **REALLY!**

Wow!

Jesus chose to come to us in this way for so many different reasons, but at the heart of it all is that He wants us in His Heart! He loves us so much (see last week’s article for a more developed conversation about His love) that He wants to be one with us. I’ve been told by a friend that “only women really understand the Eucharist.” She cites the common phenomenon of mothers, when seeing their little babies, say something along the lines of, “I want to eat you up”... even nibbling their toes! She tells me this is because they want to be so united with their babies that they want to “nibble” on them. Maybe she’s right, maybe she’s not. Somehow, though, God wants to be so united with us, that He allows us to “nibble” on Him – not just metaphorically, but in reality and actuality! He wants, more than anything, for us to be one with Him.

Without the priesthood, though, there is no Eucharist. As I have mentioned the last several weeks, this weekend the Bishop has asked that we pray for an increase in Vocations to the priesthood in the Diocese of Manchester. In case you didn’t know, we are at a crisis point in the priest to parish ratio. I don’t know what the future will bring, but the Bishop is being proactive (for instance, naming a full-time vocation director and two assistant vocation directors... one being “yours truly”). We believe that the vocation to the priesthood is not the result of a person wanting it a lot. No, vocations come from God Himself (hence, vocation means “calling”). I don’t believe that God has stopped calling men to the priesthood. God has poured out a super-abundance of vocations, as He always has. I see the two biggest problems in *responding* to the call of God being: 1) we are not listening; 2) we don’t want to say “yes.”

*We are not listening.* Our culture is supersaturated with noise. There used to be time when we had nothing to do when it was dark out (no electricity) or when we were in a waiting room. Now, any time, day or night, we have instant access to movies, music, social media, etc.. While the accessibility creates incredible opportunities, it often leaves no space for listening to God. We have stopped listening for His Voice. And yes, God does still really speak to us! He has words of love and life for us. He calls us to greatness. We need to spend time in silence listening for His voice!

*We don’t want to say “yes.”* I think this mostly comes from fear. We may think that God is calling us to something, but we’re afraid. Fear of commitment is rampant in the culture. Of course we see this is the declining numbers of religious vocations and marriages, but there’s a great lack of commitment in so many areas. A friend invites friends to the movies on Friday night. Few if any respond – they don’t want to say “no” since it is a movie they want to see and it could be a good time, but they don’t say “yes” in case something better comes up... they want to be available for the better. Put that mentality into marriage or a religious vocation, and it’s easy to see why our young people are afraid to commit. We have lost a sense that God really does have the best plan for our lives. You see, if God is calling us somewhere, then there will be NO BETTER OFFER! There will be sacrifice, struggle, and pain. All growth requires that. But there will be nothing better to come along later to fulfill us.

Most likely, you’re reading this after 40 Hours Devotion is over, but in any case we have dedicated this weekend to prayer for vocations to the priesthood so that men will learn to listen to God and have the courage to say “yes” to Him. Even when 40 Hours are over, I beg you, *please keep praying*. Pray every day for an increase in “yeses” to God. Without priests, we have no Eucharist – the most profound union with God we can have in this world!