



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend we celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ. I rejoice greatly that we can celebrate this together at Mass with a Congregation! The mystery of the Eucharist is an incredible mystery to contemplate, and into which we *enter* each time we go to Adoration, the Mass and receive Communion.

Who could ever have possibly asked Almighty God to give us His flesh to eat? It goes against our natural inclinations, yet, this incredible gift is the gift of true union with God! He Himself gives us this gift without our asking. In the Gospel today, Jesus tells us that we have to eat His flesh, which is true food (see John 6: 55), and that if we eat His flesh, we will live forever (see John 6:51, 54).

The Eucharist is a gift to ponder. This is a gift of union and of love. When we receive Communion, it is not merely a symbol of Jesus, but His very being – Body, Blood and Soul (His humanity), and His total Divinity (God-ness). As a mother, when holding her baby, might say, “I just want to eat you up,” so Jesus allows us to “eat Him up.” It is a sign of union, for that which we eat becomes part of us, makes us into itself, as we make it into us. Jesus is saying, “I want you to become one with Me, as the Father is one with Me and I with the Father. I want to be in you as I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.” When we receive Communion, we receive the gift of oneness with Jesus.

Remember, the summary of the Bible is that “God wants to marry us.” The full sign of this is when Jesus gives us His Flesh and Blood on the Cross. In a certain sense, from the Cross, He says, “This is my Body given up for you” (the words from the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, see Luke 22:19). The Eucharist brings the sacrifice of the Cross – which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, went from Calvary 2000 years ago into Heaven for eternity – from eternity into this time in this place, into St. Patrick Church, Pelham, NH on June 14, 2020. At each Mass, we are at the foot of the Cross with Christ, and that gift of His love then enters our bodies and our souls when we receive Communion.

This means that it is imperative for us to prepare for Communion. We need time to drop the distractions of our lives and focus on the mystery of God’s incredible love for us. This is why we spend time before Mass preparing ourselves, entering into prayer. This is why we look at our sins at the beginning of Mass and repent of them (“Lord, have mercy”). This is why we listen to the loving Word of God in the Sacred Scriptures, so that our hearts and minds can begin to be attuned to the incredible love of God that will be poured out on the Altar. This is why, just before we receive Communion, we say, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” We do all of these things so that we can prepare ourselves to receive our God ... and not just to receive Him, but to become one with Him.

As a husband and wife enter into the marriage act, they have a choice. They can choose to see the marriage act as a way of taking care of their own needs, giving themselves pleasure, comfort or release. Or they can choose to enter it as an act of selfless love for the other, desiring union with the one they love, giving themselves fully to each other, and receiving the other to themselves. In the same way, we can go to Holy Communion with a selfish attitude or merely as a matter of “the thing we do,” or we can go seeing it as self-gift, looking to unite ourselves with the Heart of Jesus, our King, our Lover, our God.

As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, I invite you to prepare yourself for the incredible union with Almighty God that He so longs for and desires.