

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

I would like to begin this week's article on the feast of Corpus Christi with a story by the 20th century American Catholic author Flannery O'Connor:

I was once, five or six years ago, taken by some friends to have dinner with Mary McCarthy and her husband, Mr. Broadwater. (She just wrote that book, "A Charmed Life.") She departed the Church at the age of 15 and is a Big Intellectual. We went at eight and at one, I hadn't opened my mouth once, there being nothing for me in such company to say. The people who took me were Robert Lowell and his now wife, Elizabeth Hardwick. Having me there was like having a dog present who had been trained to say a few words but overcome with inadequacy had forgotten them. Well, toward morning the conversation turned on the Eucharist, which I, being the Catholic, was obviously supposed to defend. Mrs. Broadwater said when she was a child and received the Host, she thought of it as the Holy Ghost, He being the 'most portable' person of the Trinity; now she thought of it as a symbol and implied that it was a pretty good one. I then said, in a very shaky voice, 'Well, if it's a symbol, to hell with it.' That was all the defense I was capable of but I realize now that this is all I will ever be able to say about it, outside of a story, except that it is the center of existence for me; all the rest of life is expendable. (Letter written by Flannery O'Connor, December of 1955)

Catholics often forget the reality of what is in our tabernacles and on our altars throughout the world. It is truly the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why is it that we believe this? It's because our Lord said so! The same God that speaks the world into existence; the same God that said "Let there be light" and made it so; the same Lord that said to the crippled man "Arise and walk;" the same Lord that said to the dead Lazarus "Lazarus, come out," raising him from the dead is the same Lord that said of ordinary bread and wine "This is my body" and "This is my blood." How incredible this is! What a gift our Lord has given us! At the Ascension, our Lord promised that He would remain with us and He has kept that promise for over 2000 years.

On this feast of Corpus Christi, ask yourself this question: "Do I take the Eucharist for granted?" In John 6, we see many disciples leave Jesus because they did not understand the Eucharist. They said it was a "hard saying" (John 6:60) When the disciples leave, Jesus asks the apostles whether they will leave as well; Saint Peter answers "Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Saint Peter does not ask our Lord to explain it further, but rather, he affirms his trust that whatever Jesus says is true: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Are we like the disciples who left or are we like Saint Peter? Do we dismiss the words of Christ because they are difficult to understand or do we believe and trust in Him because He has the words of eternal life?