

Corpus Christi - B  
Exodus 24:3-8;  
Hebrews 9:11-15;  
Mark 14:12-16, 22-26  
Little Flower - 6/2/24

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, commonly called Corpus Christi, which means *Body of Christ*. In today's Gospel, we heard the story of the Last Supper, the story of the First Eucharist.

Two themes run through today's readings. They are the themes of covenant and sacrifice. A biblical covenant is a relationship of love between God and his people. Today's reading from Exodus tells the story of the establishment of God's covenant with Israel which was sealed by the offering of holocausts and peace offerings and the sprinkling of the people with the blood of the covenant. The Gospel tells the story of the Last Supper, the institution of the Eucharist, and the establishment of the New Covenant in Christ's blood. The reading from Hebrews is a theological reflection on the New Covenant in Christ's blood.

We have just completed the second year of the National Eucharistic Revival as we prepare for the National Eucharistic Congress here in Indianapolis from July 17-21. The National Eucharistic Revival has focused on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, which is only natural since it was prompted by a survey which showed that even some active, practicing Catholics no longer believe in Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist. Because of this, there has been a great deal of focus on adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

My concern is that there has been an underemphasis on the celebration of the Eucharist. Because today's readings focus on sacrifice and covenant, I want to focus on Sunday Liturgy at Little Flower. From the time I arrived here in 2003, it was clear that it was the celebration of the Eucharist, especially our music, and our welcoming spirit that drew people to the parish. I think this is still largely true. However, we can do a better job reaching out to others. A couple of weeks ago, I concelebrated a funeral at St. Christopher. One of the women serving the funeral luncheon told me that when she left another parish where she did not feel welcome and joined St. Christopher in 2003, she felt welcomed her first Sunday because as I was walking around church before Mass, as I often do here, I came up to her and asked her name. Likewise, although we do a good job celebrating Liturgy, we could do a better job. We are not called to be spectators at Sunday Mass. There are many of us who do not pray aloud or sing during Mass. Just think how much more alive our Liturgy would be if everyone prayed and sang with energy.

As you know, parish attendance at Mass was greatly affected when we were no longer able to attend Mass in person in 2020 because of COVID. Our pre-pandemic average weekly attendance from December 2019 to February 2020 was 608. The first year we returned our average attendance was 249. The following year it was 434, and we have been inching up slowly since then. Average attendance the first three weeks of May was 545. One of the most interesting theories I have heard for people not returning to Mass is that people who attended primarily to fulfill their Sunday obligation or out of habit discovered during the time church was closed that they were fine without attending Sunday Mass or by watching online. As a parish, we still need to encourage people to come home to Little Flower.

Several people have asked when we can return to six cups at Communion. The answer is very simple. We simply do not have enough Eucharistic Ministers or head Eucharistic Ministers to schedule six cups without some people getting over scheduled. We need more people to serve as Eucharistic ministers and as head Eucharistic ministers. Please consider volunteering.

My brothers and sisters, St. Thomas Aquinas proposed a beautiful statement of our faith in the Eucharist: "O holy banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of his passion is renewed, the soul is filled with grace, and there is given to us a pledge of future glory."