

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Corpus Christi 2019

Corpus Christi

Cathedral of Mary Our Queen

June 23, 2019

The Mystery of Faith

As Catholics we profess our faith at Mass every Sunday. After God's Word has been proclaimed and preached, we recite the Creed, usually the Nicene Creed. It is a way of summing up God's Word that reminds us of who God is, what God has done for us, why we belong to the Church, and what we hope for.

On Corpus Christi Sunday, the Solemnity of the Lord's Body and Blood, a day dedicated specially to the mystery of the Eucharist, let us profess our faith specifically in the mystery of the Eucharist: in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and in the Mass as the banquet of Christ's Paschal Sacrifice, acknowledging at the same time why this mystery of faith is so important in our lives. Unlike the Creed we recite on Sunday, this profession of faith is more personal – a witness to faith in the Eucharist that flows from our lived experience.

A World of Isolation

But let me begin with a simple observation. I don't know if you feel it but somehow life is changing and not for the better. Paradoxically our connectivity seems to have separated us from one another. So many people live in a virtual world that is anything but civil. Both online and off, people are angrier, more divided, and more isolated than ever. We experience this in social media, on cable news, in politics, among our co-workers, and sometimes even among our families, friends, and fellow Catholics ...

Yet, no matter how the world changes around us, we human beings were created, not to be isolated from one another, but rather for communion – for a union of love, friendship, and joy – with God, with our families, and with people all around us. No

one of us is self-sufficient. No one of us finds happiness in hatred and conflict. Something in us longs for something better.

I Believe in the Mystery of Communion

We often speak of receiving the Eucharist as “going to Holy Communion”. Perhaps some of your children received their first Holy Communion this spring. So, we use the word “communion” a lot but what does it really mean? Doesn’t it correspond to that deep longing that each one of us has to be loved and to love in return, to be surrounded by a loving God and by a loving community of faith, to be a part of something much bigger and better than ourselves?

I believe in the mystery of Holy Communion, dear friends, because, when I celebrate or participate in the Eucharist, I am united in the power of the Holy Spirit with Jesus Christ. As my Brother and my Redeemer, he leads me to loving union with the Heavenly Father. By receiving our Lord in Holy Communion, I begin to participate in the eternal exchange of love in the heart of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In my heart, I find an emptiness that nothing earthly can fill, only God’s infinite love. In my emptiness, I long to be filled by the reception of Our Lord in Holy Communion.

I believe in the mystery of Holy Communion, dear friends, because, when I celebrate or participate in the Eucharist, I am united with my brothers and sisters in the Church - with those I join with in celebrating Mass in some particular Church, but also with fellow believers throughout the Archdiocese and the Universal Church, including those who suffer persecution for their faith and those whose experience is very different from my own. This communion extends even to the saints who worship God face to face in heaven! In my isolation and loneliness, amid my weakness and frailty, I sense deeply my need to be united with fellow believers in the Church. Whatever disagreements, problems, or failures beset the Church’s earthly life, somehow the knowledge that fellow Catholics profess the same faith and find their strength in the same Source of nourishment, gives me strength and joy.

I believe in the mystery of Holy Communion, dear friends, because, when I celebrate or participate in the Eucharist, Christ comes to me in the power of his Sacrifice and the reality of His Presence. In our reading from Genesis, Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything. In the Eucharist, God the Father gives us not a tenth of

everything, but everything, as he pours out upon you and me the self-giving love at the heart of his Triune Life. He pours out everything as he continues to give us his Son who came among us in the poverty of our flesh, who died on the altar of the Cross for our sins and rose to unlock the gates of heaven. As the Church sings yearly at the Easter Vigil, "...to ransom a slave he gave away his Son". Yes, by dying he destroyed our sins and death. By rising he restored our life! I believe in the Eucharist because this is how the power of the Cross reaches me, how I encounter the Lord whose sacrificial love does not fade through the centuries, the Lord who comes to me with a mercy that my sins do not deserve, the Lord who comes to me neither virtually nor as a mere idea or emotion, but personally and powerfully under the guise of a bit of bread and a sip of wine. Like the early Christian martyrs, the older I become the more I truly do realize that I cannot live without the power of his Sacrifice and the reality of his Presence.

I believe in the mystery of Holy Communion, for when I celebrate or participate in the Eucharist, I know that I am loved not merely for a fleeting instant but with an eternal and infinite love that spans time and eternity. We are flesh and blood, earthbound people but somewhere deep within is the spark of eternity and a longing for immortality that is starkly contradicted by death. Saint Pope John Paul II used to say that when we receive the Eucharist, we "digest" the secret of the Resurrection, the secret of that new and eternal life that was implanted in the depth of our souls on the day of our Baptism. This is the life that is nurtured by the Eucharist and renewed by the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

I believe in the mystery of Holy Communion because, when I go before the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the Tabernacle, there to listen to his voice and to pour out my heart, then it is that I center my life not on what I can do or what I have but rather on the Lord Jesus Christ, the truth and the life, the Eucharistic Lord who is for us the way, the truth, and the life.

Conclusion

If you share this faith, if this is indeed the faith we share, can we keep it to ourselves? Can we remain silent when fellow Catholics walk away, either because of scandal or indifference or cultural influences? We are called to be Eucharistic

missionaries who profess our faith in the Eucharist, who draw our strength from the Eucharist, and who share this Good News with those around us, with those who are themselves longing for a communion of life and love.

O Sacrament Most Holy! O Sacrament Divine! All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine!