

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Corpus Christi - St. Paul, Ellicott City

Corpus Christi

St. Paul Parish, Ellicott City

June 2, 2018

Years ago, when I was newly ordained, I thought of myself a very busy person. After all, I had a parish to serve and a doctorate in theology to earn. I told myself that I had to manage my time well so as to fit everything in. Among the items on my calendar one day was a hospital visit to a parishioner. She was seriously ill and likely did not have long to live. Sad to say, I had 'budgeted' only a certain amount of time for that visit.

After ministering to her, I asked if there were anything else I could do for her. She smiled at this newly minted priest and said, "Yes, Father, there is. I don't have long to live and I'm all alone. Would you sit with me a while?"

There was only one right answer.

"Of course, I will," said I.

I stayed with her until she went home to God.

The next morning, when I went into the parish church to pray, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was waiting for me.

As soon as I sat down near the tabernacle, I could almost hear the eucharistic Lord saying to me: "I remain with you. Shouldn't you be willing to remain with people who need you?"

It was then that I remembered the many good priests who taught me about the link between Jesus' true presence in the Eucharist and the presence we owe to one another.

It was this early lesson in my priesthood that prompted me to come here today as

you cope with the aftermath of severe flooding, a severe hardship coming so soon after the catastrophic flood in 2016.

A number of you, I know, were able to view your flood-damaged properties today and that you face difficult questions and decisions as you look to the future.

In this wonderful, close-knit community, many are pitching in to help. I want to thank you, the community of St. Paul's Parish and your pastor, Father (Warren) Tanghe, for your generous response and in the same breath to thank the heroic people who responded to this crisis by providing emergency services.

I came today just to be with you, to pray with you, to offer you a word of love and encouragement in a difficult time, and to remind you and myself of the abiding eucharistic presence of the Lord in our midst.

For this is what the Feast of Corpus Christi is all about – the true eucharistic presence of Jesus – his body, blood, soul and divinity.

A principal message of today's feast might be summed up this way: as Jesus is present to us in the Eucharist, so we need to be present to those in need.

The presence of loved ones and friends in time of tragedy is consoling. Even if they cannot change the situation we're facing, we find it consoling to be with those who love us and those who listen to the pleadings of our hearts.

We also rely on the friendship and love of those who know us well, who know our strengths and weakness, who understand how we react to the curve balls that life inevitably hurls at us in one form or another. They give us perspective and renew our joy.

Pope Francis often reminds us that the Lord knows us, loves us, and cares about us. Although he is the mighty Son of God, Jesus is also our Good Shepherd who draws near to us in the Eucharist so that his heart might speak to ours and our hearts might speak to his.

As we read in Psalm 23, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are there with your rod and your staff and with these you

comfort me.”

The Lord does indeed speak to us words of love, hope, and encouragement. How important that we pray at all times but especially in time of trouble.

And if the Lord’s presence is consoling, it is also a powerful presence. Scripture teaches us that the Lord loved us so much that he shared our life, he shared our weakness, and in the depths of his love for us, he shared even our death – giving up his very life for us on the cross on the altar of the cross.

Isn’t this is what we see in today’s Scripture readings?

The sacrifices of the Old Testament in which the blood of animals was shed cleansed the people of external or ritual impurity. Those sacrifices have been surpassed by the one sacrifice of Christ who shed his blood and gave his life to cleanse us of our sins, to cleanse us in our depths so as to enable us to share in God’s own life and love.

In that same vein, Bishop Robert Barron reminds us that . . . “[Jesus] gave [us], not a teaching, a discipline, or a spiritual insight but his substance” – his very life.

Reflecting on today Scripture readings proclaimed, let us ask the Lord to fill our hearts with gratitude and joy for the gift of the Eucharist.

We hear Jesus’ words over the bread and the cup – “Take and eat, this is my body” – “This is the blood of the covenant that will be shed for many” –

As we listen those words, we recognize in faith how the Lord continues to offer his one sacrifice for us, every time Mass is offered. In this way, the Lord remains present to us and to the whole Church, in good times and bad, in thick and thin, until the end of the world.

This is why Jesus commanded his Apostles “do this in memory of me” – that is to say, “continue to offer the same sacrificial meal that I have offered”: because, in his love for us, the Redeemer wanted you and me and untold multitudes to be linked to him and to his saving sacrifice throughout our lives through the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Just as the Lord invites us to share in his presence, so too the Lord, in ways that are sometimes hard for us to understand, invites us to share in the mystery of his own redemptive sufferings.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells his Apostles: "I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know what his master is about - instead I call you friends."

As the Lord's disciples and as his friends, he allows us, through the events of our lives, to share in his redemptive suffering for the world's salvation.

In experiencing the Lord's infinite love for us, do we not also hear the Lord saying to you and me - "Love one another as I have loved you"?

The true presence of the Lord and his sacrificial love, leads us, gently but persistently, to move beyond the pressing cares of the moment.

So often our worries absorb all our time and energy but the Gospel teaches us that it is liberating to focus on the needs of others.

In reaching out to your friends and neighbors who are enduring such a difficult plight, you give evidence that the Christ whom you receive lives in your heart, speaks with your voice, and serves with your hands.

And when you do this not merely as individuals but as a community of faith, you will find that bearing the Lord's Cross eventually becomes "a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light."

So let the Lord's eucharistic presence make us more present to one another and may his sacrificial love - his body and his blood given out of love for us - enable us, even in the most trying of times, to give of ourselves to others.

For that is the key to rebuilding not merely our town but indeed our very lives.

May the Lord bless and keep us always in his love!

Also see:

Archbishop Lori urges Ellicott City parishioners to help one another in flood

aftermath