

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

June 11, 2023

I don't have to tell you that we are all different. That seems rather obvious. We look quite different from each other. We act differently. Think differently. Live differently. Yes, we are not all the same. In fact, no two of us are exactly the same in every respect not even twins. And one of the areas in which we find a great deal of difference is in what seems to "sustain" us.

Many of us are sustained by the loving relationships we have built over the years, relationships with spouses and children and parents and friends. Those things can truly be life-giving. Others of us are sustained by the work we do. We draw a great deal of meaning and satisfaction from our job, confident that our daily toil is making an important and lasting difference in this world. Some of us are sustained by the pleasure of the activities we engage in, whether that be exercise, or music, or sports, or movies, or traveling, or reading, or art, or participation in some sort of club or charity, or whatever.

Yes, even the things that sustain us seem to come from a whole bunch of different places. I'm sure that helps make this life interesting and surprising and ever-changing.

Today, we gather on one of the great solemnities of the Church, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ - "Corpus Christi" in Latin. As you well know, the importance of this belief, this understanding, this Sacrament, cannot be overestimated. It has been at the heart of the Catholic community since the beginning, since they first gathered at table to remember and re-present and re-experience what the Lord commanded his first followers to do in his memory.

And for two thousand years and counting we, the community of faith, have been unpacking and struggling with and deepening our understanding of this profound mystery. It's who we are. It's what we believe. It's who we pledge to give our lives over to. It's (as the Church proclaims) both the summit and source of our identity as Catholics. And we are incredibly grateful for it - grateful for our God who has gifted us in this incredible way.

And there is much we could contemplate about what we say happens at this table, much we can wonder about and try to understand. And if you think that what the Church says happens here (and how it says it happens), the "theology" of the Sacrament, if you will, is hard to wrap your minds around, don't worry. Honestly, we are all in the same boat regarding that. If anyone tells you that he or she has it all "figured out" or has a complete understanding of it or thinks it all makes absolutely "perfect sense," they are almost certainly deluding themselves or being, at least, intellectually dishonest. This is not easy stuff to understand. It wasn't easy to grasp two thousand years ago and it certainly isn't today. And that's okay. In fact, it's completely understandable.

Today, for the purpose of this homily, I'd like us to just consider one particular question that surrounds this mystery, one question that this celebration invites us to consider, one that sounds relatively simple, but isn't. And the question is this:

What sustains you?

Of course, I started this homily saying that there are many answers to that question, that we are often quite different in that particular respect. Yet, is that true? Or is that just the way things appear to be? In other words, is there something that is the universal answer to that seemingly simple question, an answer that pertains to us all? Of course there is. Yet, that “something” is not a “thing” at all, of course. It’s a someone. It’s our loving God.

God is the ONE every single one of us needs. We often don’t think of God as someone who “sustains” us, do we? Created us? Of course. We believe that this world didn’t just come about accidentally. Our very existence is God’s doing.

Expects certain things from us? Of course. We believe that some of our behavior has a moral component, that some of our actions are either “right” or “wrong”, either in line with what God wants, or opposed to his desires.

Gives us certain things? Of course. Most of us pray often for certain things from God. Sometimes we get what we want, and sometimes God makes a different choice. And while we don’t really know how all that “works”, we turn to him nonetheless, trusting and hoping that he is the only one able to do anything about it.

Will judge us at the end of our days? Of course. We believe in the freedom God gives us as a gift, a freedom that can either lead to heaven or conversely, can ultimately lead to separation from God and his heavenly kingdom, that is, if it is chosen freely, completely, and with full knowledge that we are doing so. Yes, we believe God acts in many ways.

But sustains us? It’s sort of easy to forget this one. We often turn to God only in certain moments, when we “need” him. It’s as if we imagine that he’s somewhere waiting for the phone to ring. And the rest of the time he is, well, who knows what he’s “doing”? What we often forget about is the enduring, imminent presence of God.

This is a God who is very close. This is a God who guides us as we struggle to stay on the path. This is a God who inspires us and moves us and comforts us, not occasionally, but continually. This is a God who helps us take the next step, make the next choice, love the next person we come upon, forgive the next offense, take the next breath. This is our God! This is a God who doesn’t just “pop-in” once in a while like Superman, but rather is someone who holds us in the palm of his hand, holds us in being, caring for us with a compassion and tenderness and love far beyond our wildest expectations, every second of every day.

God the Sustainer.

And that’s really what this Sacrament is all about. You see, there are lots of ways God comes to us, lots of opportunities for God to do what God does. There’s not even a finite list. It never ends. But on that

list we would certainly find our God coming to us and sustaining us and nourishing us through the prayers we make. And in silence. And through Sacred Scripture. And through each other. And through the joys of life. And yes, also through the disappointments and challenges and sorrows that come our way. Put another way, God is acting on our behalf all the time, and everywhere, and through people we would never expect. But those things can be so easy to miss, can be hard to see, can come and go without us even being aware of the God in our midst.

But here it's different. At this table it's different. In this Sacrament God comes to us in a very visible way, in a concrete way, in a profound way, in an INTIMATE way. This holy meal helps to both bring about and remind us of that great truth, that the only thing we TRULY need - the only ONE we truly need, is God. So many other things in this life might feel, at times, to be more important, but ultimately they aren't. God is the one who is sustaining us, nourishing us through it all. We would be wise never to forget that.

So let's treasure this incredible Sacrament, treasure this holy food, food for the journey (Viaticum). And let's let the God who comes to us at this table make us into the people he wants us to be, help us become what (whom) we eat. And may it also be a reminder to us to always be aware of the countless ways God sustains us beyond these walls, in the important and in the mundane, in the joys and the sorrows, through people we like and people we're not too crazy about.

God wants to be real food for us. God wants to fill us with love and inspiration and courage and hope - wants us to be his Body in a world in need of every good thing. So, let's not just say "Amen" - "I believe" - when we encounter our Lord in this holy meal. Let's also find opportunities to give our "Amen" (our "I believe") to the countless other times our God comes to us and sustains us each and every day. Then, God will have done what he hopes to do through this Sacrament, will have transformed us into something much more than we were yesterday, people living in closer imitation of his Son.

That's what we believe.

That's what we hope for.

And that indeed is what we trust this meal will bring about.

Father Boat

