

**Homily – Mark 14: 12-16, 22-26**  
**Feast of Corpus Christi, Year B**  
**5<sup>th</sup> / 6<sup>th</sup> June 2021 Riverstown / Sooeey**

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Take and eat, this is my Body. Take and drink, this is my Blood

Malcolm Muggeridge, a well-known English journalist and satirist, once accompanied a film crew to India in order to narrate a documentary on Mother Teresa. And the moment he met her, Malcolm realized that he was in the presence of someone of a unique quality: he found a wonderful woman who was so very compelling and the beauty of holiness radiant on her face inspired him to title his documentary as: **Something Beautiful for God**. And when Malcolm asked Mother Teresa why she went to Mass every morning, she replied with a gentle smile: "If I didn't meet my Master every day in the Eucharist, I'd be doing no more than mere social work."

Well! Today, we celebrate the solemn feast of *Corpus Christi*: The feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. This Solemnity is three feasts in one: 'the feast of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the feast of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and the feast of the Real Presence of Jesus in this Sacrament'. It is in fact an opportunity that the Church gives us every year to simply pause and reflect on the great gift that we have in the Eucharist.

The Readings of today emphasize the theme of Covenant blood because the ancient peoples sealed covenants with the blood of ritually sacrificed animals, and Jesus sealed this New Covenant with his own Blood, shed on Calvary. And the Gospel of today details how Jesus converted this ancient ritual into a Sacrament and sacrifice. Instead of the lamb's blood, Jesus offered his own Body and Blood and, instead of sprinkling us with blood, Jesus put it into our hands as food. Mark recounts the institution of the Eucharist - how Jesus said to His disciples, gathered for the Seder: "Take, ... eat ... this is my Body" And a little later, He said to them again: "Take this ... drink from it, for this is ... my Blood ... which will be poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins".

The very next day Jesus was going to die on the Cross and return to His Father in Heaven. He was leaving. He had to leave, but He wanted to stay to be present to you and to me and to the people He loves here on earth. And He finds a way to do both, in the food and the drink that He tells us to share. He understands that when we gather together at this table to share the bread of life, the bread that comes down from heaven, it is He Himself who is present in the bread and the wine; it is He Himself who is present to us in the sharing of this

meal that He told us to share. He is truly present. He is really here.

Now, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is a meal. It is a Sacred Meal. The Altar is a table where we as God's family are fed, where the soul is nourished by the Bread of heaven, the Bread of life. Yes! Jesus feeds us at every Eucharist. And we savour His presence.

One of the most influential persons in the life of Pope Francis, was his grandmother, 'Rosa', says the Holy Father. Pope Francis recollects the words of his grandmother who used to often tell him: "If you have any difficulties in life, you should kneel before the tabernacle and remind yourself that it contains the real presence of the Crucified Lord who offered himself totally for your sake".

Reflecting on my own life, I should admit in all honesty, that without the faith in the Eucharist that my parents had handed on to me, and which I always kept burning in my life, I don't think I will now be here celebrating this Eucharist with you and for you today.

I can still very clearly remember how my mother used to take us to the Church every day for the Holy Mass when we were young children. She taught us to love the Eucharist and reverence it. And probably because of the

love for the Eucharist that she instilled in me, just after my Secondary School at the age of 15 in 1991, I joined the seminary with my boyhood dream of becoming a priest. And when I was ordained a priest in 2007 after 17 years of formation, the only prayer I had made to God was this that I might have the grace to love the Holy Eucharist and be able to celebrate it with great devotion, trust and faith. And I am convinced, even to this day, with all my unworthiness as a priest God still gives me the grace to love this Sacrament and celebrate it with deep faith.

I am reminded of a story that speaks of ‘the love and reverence’ for the Holy Eucharist. The story is told of Dorothy Day, an American journalist and social activist of the last century who was also the founder of the Catholic Worker Movement. One day, in the 70s, a priest came in, to one of the worker houses and was going to celebrate the Eucharist. But he had no chalice. And he had to celebrate the Mass and so picked a coffee cup, a coffee mug and used it in the place of the chalice. Well! The Mass was over and then, Dorothy Day was seen ‘out in the garden’ digging a hole to put the cup in, because she said: “once it has been the vessel for the body of Christ, it can’t just go back with the rest of the mugs”.

In the Old Testament God was in dialogue only with the Israelites. Now in the New Testament, through the Eucharist, through Jesus' body and blood, God is in dialogue with the whole of humanity. And the maxim that Jesus always gives His followers is this: "Love of God and Love of neighbor". We are a people in love with the suffering humanity, in love with those in need because God loves all His children, and He doesn't reject anyone in this world.

And this is what we need to remember dear friends: The Eucharist opens us up 'to the whole of humanity, our brothers and sisters who are suffering, the hungry, the unemployed, the sick, the vulnerable, people living in poverty, victims of drugs and abuse, the violent, unbelievers... the list is endless. And so, the invitation of the Lord to each of us on this solemnity of Corpus Christi would be that we become Eucharist for others and that we be able to nourish others as Jesus nourishes us in the Eucharist.

Several years ago, there was a Eucharistic congress in Philadelphia and Pedro Arrupe who at that time was the head of the Jesuits, the 28<sup>th</sup> Superior General of the Society of Jesus was one of the speakers. It was on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1976, and while addressing the people gathered there for the Congress, Pedro Arrupe had this

powerful and touching statement to make. He said: “If anyone goes to bed hungry today, the Eucharist is incomplete. If there is hunger anywhere in the world, then our celebration of the Eucharist is somehow incomplete everywhere in the world”.

Well, dear friends, on this feast day let us pray that we may have the grace to recognize Jesus in the breaking of the Bread. And may that experience lead us closer to Jesus and to one another. God bless you all, **Amen.**