

06/02/13 Corpus Christi C

-- When the 2nd Vatican Council began its work in the early 1960's it's not surprising that its first major document was on the liturgy. Indeed, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* was the first council document to have practical effects in ordinary parishes.

-- Toward the beginning of the constitution, the council called the Eucharistic Liturgy (Mass) the source (or font) of the Church's power and the summit toward which the Church's activity is directed.

-- In other words, what we do right here gives us the strength to accomplish what we are called to as a Church. And it also is the goal of our activity—all we do should lead people to this Eucharistic liturgy.

-- Today's feast of the Body and Blood of Christ shines a spotlight on the Mass and, in particular, on the Eucharist. For here, Christ gives us his body and blood under the form of bread and wine.

-- And, during Mass, we participate in Christ's sacrifice of himself at Calvary. That's why the Eucharist is both a sacrifice and a meal. It was first given to the apostles during a meal on the night before Jesus died.

-- As Jesus offered it, he said *This is my body which is given for you...This is my blood which is poured out for you*. He would do just that the very next day on Calvary.

-- He told his followers to do this in memory of him. And so the Church has carried on the Eucharistic sacrifice from its first days to the present.

-- The Eucharistic acclamation we often use after the consecration at Mass summarizes it well: *We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your resurrection until you come again*. This acclamation echoes Paul's words in our 2nd reading today.

-- At Mass we proclaim Jesus' death. He was not just a great teacher who had a good following. He poured out his very life for us. He went to the cross out of faithfulness to his Father's will.

-- *We profess your resurrection*: Jesus didn't simply die like any other martyr. He was raised to life. Indeed, as St. Paul says, if Christ has not been raised our faith is useless.

- *Until you come again*: When we receive the Body and Blood of Christ at Mass, we look forward to the day when Christ will take all things to himself. Then we will all be united together, praising God in the heavenly liturgy that will never end.
- Reflecting on what Vatican II said and how the liturgy itself focuses on the Eucharist, I think there are some practical things we ought to consider.
- First, we should never approach to receive the Body and Blood of Christ casually. This is a great gift we should never take for granted. (St. John Chrysostom's reminder) Our slight bow before we receive should remind us of who we are receiving.
- Second, the Eucharist is not simply a means to personal holiness. It binds us to one another. It calls us to serve each other, especially the least of our sisters and brothers.
- When we are hungry, it's not enough to recall a time when we ate a delicious hamburger or steak or whatever is our favorite food. We need real food to satisfy our hunger.
- So, too, at Mass, Christ feeds us with real food. Bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Our hunger is satisfied, and we are sent out to feed our brothers and sisters with the love we are given through Jesus Christ.