

Usually on this Sunday, I speak of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and how Jesus is really present through the mystery called Transubstantiation. Speaking of real presence, have you wives ever talked to your husband and they are standing right in front of you and they know what you are talking about – they are really present to you. Remember those days talking to teenagers and the response is Whatever. You know they weren't listening because they weren't really present.

Things are different this year. A study was done among Catholics and they are like Protestants who only believe that they are receiving symbolic bread. That is why they don't have a blessed Sacrament chapel. In the Archdiocese of Baltimore, faithful have been asked to focus on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and reinforce Eucharist Adoration in its two common forms.

Recently, there have been concerns voiced that perhaps for some Eucharistic Adoration detracts from the Mass. For example, many times our young people will be asked, "What was the highlight of the conference, or the week?" and they often respond, "Eucharistic Adoration." Some are concerned thinking that their response should be the Mass. They are correct in affirming that the Mass is the most important action of the Church. But, I do not share this concern regarding Eucharistic Adoration. Having an experience of the Presence of the Lord in the Eucharist is a blessing to be treasured, whether this blessing is experience at Mass or at Eucharistic Adoration, or at both.

Is the grace received at Eucharistic Adoration(Benediction) of the same dimension as that received at Mass? Of course not. At Mass we join the Lord in participating mystically in the Sacrifice of the Cross. Jesus is once more offered up for us to the Father "for our sins and the sins of the whole world," as the chaplet of Divine Mercy so elegantly declares. At Mass we take the Savior within us and are mystically united to Him before the Father, offering Himself for us. Our union with Him as the Head of the Living Body of worshipers, our union with the community, our communion, is the great gift that Catholicism has jealously preserved even in the face of persecution. In the history of the Church, including the present times, those who attack Catholicism first attack the Mass. Priests were tortured to death, hung drawn and quartered for saying Mass in sixteenth and seventeenth century England in the Protestant Reformation. There are still many places in the world where it is illegal for a priest to say Mass. There are many places in our country where anti-Catholic bigotry is expressed in a mocking of the Blessed Sacrament. I once celebrated an illegal Mass (one not sanctioned by the Soviet Union Government with the penalty of 13 years). I have a strange feeling that not all Masses closed down. Magicians used to use the term *hocus pokus* on the stage. That was a mockery of the word of consecration in Latin, "Hoc est enim corpus meum," For, this is my Body." The mockery of the Blessed Sacrament infuriates us because we treasure the Mass. And, yes, it is and should be the highlight of our lives.

Eucharistic Adoration leads us to a deeper understanding and appreciation of what we are doing at Mass and Whom we are receiving at communion. Should Eucharistic Adoration ever replace Mass? Of course not. Nor could it. Should it be

disparaged in any way? What a pity that would be. At the same time, care needs to be taken that Adoration services don't become merely an emotional experience. Nor should they be cold, dry experiences devoid of human expression similar to the old pre-Vatican Benediction services. With this said, I am saddened that anyone would want to take the experience of Jesus Christ at Eucharistic Adoration away from anyone else, particularly the young.

The Solemnity of Corpus Christi forces us to take a deep look at our belief in the Eucharist as well as our participation in the Eucharistic Community that is the Church. The solemnity reminds us: This is Jesus. He is present on our altars offering Himself up for us to the Father. He is present within us in the reception of communion. He is present at Eucharistic Adoration looking at us as we look at Him.

And He is present in our tabernacles. What a pity it is that so many of our churches have become social halls before Mass. Some people even ignore the people next to them trying to pray before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. Perhaps a good reminder for us all of what a Catholic Church is would come if we return to the fundamentals: genuflecting when we enter the pew, right knee people, and kneeling to speak to the Presence of the Lord before us. We should also genuflect or at least bow any time that we cross in front of the tabernacle. By the way, we should be sure that there is as little movement around the Church as possible during the Eucharistic Prayer.

Ask yourselves: What am I doing here when I come to Mass, when I receive communion, when I go to Eucharistic Adoration. What are we doing? The Solemnity of Corpus Christi tells us what we are doing. We are experiencing the Presence of Jesus Christ in the Great Gift of the Eucharist.

The numbers are key. Gotta see those numbers. What's the cholesterol number, how much "good" cholesterol, and how much bad. It all comes down to blood work. I go for a physical and the doctor barely touches my body. "Go downstairs and let them take your blood," he says. If the numbers come in within range, they think everything is perfect. So my triglycerides were high. My cardiologist says, "lose 10 pounds." I'm thinking, I weigh less than you do! But then begins months without pasta and bread, near death for an Italian. "Take fish oil," someone says. Sure enough, 6 pounds and many fish-oil pills later, my triglycerides are great!

So today we think that blood tells the story. It reveals what is going on in various parts of the body, our blood-sugar numbers, our PSA scores, irregularities in other parts of our bodies. Is there another story blood can tell?

Unlike the focus of this Feast in other Cycles, our current Cycle B readings emphasize not the Body of the Eucharist, but the blood. Our reflection on the blood begins with a reading from the book of Exodus where the blood of an animal sacrifice is sprinkled. The most surprising thing is when we are told that Moses sprinkles it on the people. Where's the Clorox? we moderns think. But we don't need Clorox. We need to see that the ritual was saying that the blood of the animal, given as a sign of love and dedication, was now the blood of the people.

Covenant—blood of the covenant—blood that says: I pledge, I show my love, I show my dedication. Blood that says ultimately we are bound in death and in life. Blood that says God bonds with us, in death and in life.

This happens most graphically in Jesus, where his human blood becomes the effective sign of God's covenant with us. Hebrews tells us that the blood Jesus shed brings us into the heart of God, the temple not made with human hands, but the eternal temple which is divine life. Jesus brings our blood to God, in love and dedication. Jesus seals our covenant with God. Every time we gather for Eucharist, we see presented before us this giving our blood to God in Jesus, this dramatic love, this world-changing self-gift, of our Savior. Every time we gather for Eucharist, we renew the covenant God makes with us in Jesus.

So what does Jesus blood say? That the alienation of humankind from God is now bridged by God's gift of his Son. That the brokenness of our lives and deaths is now transformed into love by Christ. That no part of our lives need be distant from God, because God, in Jesus, has mingled blood with us.

Take this, all of you, and drink from it: This is the Chalice of my blood, of the new and eternal covenant. Poured out for you and for many to bring peace, life, and forgiveness. This blood is very good indeed, God's and ours, in Jesus. The Red Cross can do nothing like this!

Time is an asset and a liability. Call your attorney, physician, or clergy, and the first thing they do is block out a space on their calendar for you. Go to church or a meeting and you see people

looking at their watches or waiting for the hourly chime. You take time off to be with the family or to golf and, before you know it, it's time to do the next thing. Time keeps rolling like the waters in a stream.

Time is an asset and a liability. We have the choice of taking it for granted letting it pass unfulfilled or doing something to make every minute quality time in our living.

A scenario clergy are likely to hear goes like this: "I don't have time to go to church. I don't have time to read the Bible and pray each morning. By the time I get up, shower, have breakfast, it's time to go to work. On Sunday, I like to sleep late. Now and then, I like to go

fishing, or spend a weekend away. When away, I don't know where the nearest church is. And so I say a private prayer on my way to the beach and leave it at that."

The Passover in the ancient Jewish community reflects a way of capturing and making quality time. They used Unleavened Bread because it was quickly prepared. Requiring no waiting for it to rise, Unleavened Bread became the symbol of a people making a dash for freedom, a people on the move to meet God.

The early Christians were on the move, too. They met in each other's homes and in hidden basements. They were always on the watch for their persecutors. And so the ritual of the Lord's Supper the Mass continued in the tradition of what they had known for over a millennium.

This tradition of a people on the move with God was good for the early Christians, since they perceived themselves as temporary residents in this world. They were on their way to heaven, God's eternity. The weekly Eucharist requirement became the focus for the dedication of their lives and resources to God and the visible place for nurturing their sisters and brothers in the faith.

We need to treat our limited earthly life span with greater respect. The advice of the Psalmist, "Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom," can help us be better stewards of life as we know it now.

Someone has taken the time to give us some statistics. If you figure you are going to live seventy years, someone calculates that, on the average, you will spend your time like this:

- three years in education
- eight years in amusements
- six years at the dinner table
- five years traveling
- four years conversing with people on the telephone, at the bar, and in a club
- fourteen years working
- three years reading
- twenty-four years sleeping
- five months attending Eucharist weekly and praying five minutes every morning and evening.

As you adore the Blessed Sacrament, let me remind you that the Liturgy guides us in making a helpful distinction between two types of time. Linear time: the ticking of the clock, the passing of the days, weeks and years. Then, "kairotic" time, or fulfilled time. For example, a weekend at Ocean City, three days at Myrtle Beach, a family campout each one is a short period of calendar time, but their restorative benefits cannot be measured on a time scale.

In the Blessed Sacrament, we make and celebrate time on several dimensions. The Holy Eucharist makes

- sharing time
- remembering time
- giving time
- promising time

First, sharing time. It is good to watch people entering the nave, finding their way to the pew. One can feel the linking together of spirits to meet the Lord at the Altar. As we sing and begin the prayers, the feeling deepens because we want all to feel a welcome at the Altar of the Lord.

Second, remembering time. "Do this in memory of me," Jesus said.

Remembering, in this context, means more than memory or recall. Eucharistic remembering intends to be a re-enacting so as to make the reality happen again. For example, making Martin Luther King, Jr. day into a national holiday is meant to be more than a memory of King; it is meant to be a re-enactment of his "I have a dream ..." to move us to dream bigger dreams and make them come true.

A deeply moving story in our national history comes from the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. The funeral line of mourners and viewers seemed endless. A black woman entered the line seeking to have a last look at the countenance Edwin Markham called "that tender, tragic, everchanging face." She inched forward with the line of steadily extending mourners. Finally, hours afterward, her patience was rewarded. She lifted up into her arms a curly-headed little five-year-old boy, held him high in her arms, turned his head so that the focus of the little fellow's eyes would be on the face of Lincoln. And then, with tears flowing from her cheeks, she said, "Take a long, long look, honey. He died for you."

Jesus did both a recall and a re-enactment at the Last Supper. Using the format and the elements of the Passover Meal, he re-enacted the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt. Not surprisingly, he used the familiar symbols but reinvested them with new meaning. He changed the bread into his body and the wine into his blood. Then he linked the meal to the banquet in heaven, making it a foretaste of the rich, eternal fellowship with God for which all humankind is created.

Thirdly, giving time. Being incorporated into Christ's saving action, feeling rescued, feeling assured that this experience makes an effective difference, convinces one, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that it is real but also beyond description.

Once we have centered in on God's action, recalled Christ's life, death and Resurrection, then we are beginning to be ready for what God wants to give us forgiveness of sins, strengthened faith, and hope of eternal life.

Fourth and finally, promising time. Throughout the Bible "covenant" is the word for God's promise of faithfulness to his people. Covenant signifies a promise more binding than a contract. In a contract, if one party fails to fulfill his/her promise, the other party is free of obligation, whereas in a covenant the promise stands. So, for all practical purposes, God marries us: "I, the Lord, take you to be my bride. I promise to be true to you in good times and bad times." I know no better model for understanding God's promise than the wedding vow.

But I have to say, I was not there when Moses sealed the covenant with blood. I was not there when Jesus declared, "This is my Body ... This is my Blood of the new covenant ..."

But I don't have to be there. I am here, twenty centuries away from the promise. The secret is believing and making the faith work here and now. For example, If you promise a pay raise, you're likely to hear, "When I see the pay check, I'll believe it." A woman, after her engagement to her lover, said, "I really didn't think he meant it until he put his diamond ring on my finger. Then I knew it was real."

My point is this: for twenty centuries the church has been offering up the Eucharistic Sacrifice. I believe what the church is doing is as valid and real in this global century as it was in simpler days gone

Blessed Jesus, we celebrate your eucharistic presence because, in this wonderful Sacrament, we feel a bonding that lasts forever. We believe, Lord! Help our unbelief!

III Desiano

The psychology of winning has taken surprising turns. I once ate at a restaurant chain called “Chopt,” but now I see that it’s a television show on the Discovery channel called “Chopped” where four chefs vie for the prize. They have a ridiculous list of ingredients that they have to use in a ridiculously short amount of time. As they make their dishes, they bring them to three or four experts who mostly make snide remarks—don’t you think you overdid the cinnamon?—until one of the four gets “chopped”—which is the equivalent of “You’re fired” from another famous reality show. And so on with the rest.

Kids have food fights; adults have chef fights. But the dinner table seems to be the last place for competition. After all, we come to the table with shared bonding and shared hunger. Food is not presented to us as a game to win but as a source of life. Instead of criticizing the chef, guests at the table applaud and show appreciation.

What kind of banquet does Jesus make for us in the Eucharist? Competition is the last thing it is because no one is chopped. Rather the Eucharist extends the covenant God made with Israel to all of humankind. Here we remember the “new and eternal covenant” where the cup of wine is poured out “for you and for many.” This is an ancient Jewish way of saying that God’s love does not stay with only one group; God’s love extends to all.

After our celebration of Easter and Pentecost, the Church asks us to consider how we experience Jesus’ resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Where do we get a sense of God’s life being poured into us, of union with Jesus Christ, of being empowered by the Holy Spirit? It is here, in the Eucharist, which the Church has celebrated since the first days of resurrection. “Behold I am with you always,” Jesus says. Indeed, is he not?

Jesus comes into our lives in an explicit way in the Eucharist. It isn’t like Jesus isn’t part of our lives already; rather, we cannot appreciate his being part of our lives without our coming to celebrate how he is here for us. “I will not drink this cup again until I drink it new in the Kingdom of God,” Jesus tells his disciples. Does he not drink it new with us every time we gather around his table and the cup of his blessing is held up for us? He eats with us, he drinks with us, he lives with us.

But Jesus also asks us, in the Eucharist, to enter his life, the life of the covenant where we give God true worship by the way we live. As he enters the fullness of life, which the second reading calls the true heaven, he invites us to enter with him. As he accomplishes the new covenant, he asks us to live it. As he sheds his blood for all, so Jesus invites us to live for all, to be his body present in the world today. As he invites us to his table, so he asks us to invite others, to fill up his banquet, so everyone can know the divine love he brings.

Jesus came to win, not by being the strongest physically or by being the cleverest in the kitchen. He wins by giving himself in love to the Father on behalf of all of us. He invites us to be part of his victory by living out his covenant in our daily lives.