

Children

Good morning, boys and girls. (Show them the bowl of flour.) What do you think I have in this bowl? (Let them respond.) It's flour. What is flour made from? (Let them respond.) It's made from wheat. It grows in the field and when it's ready, the farmer harvests the wheat and grinds it into flour. What is flour good for? (Let them respond.) It's good for cooking! It looks pretty ordinary to me. What can we cook with flour? (Let them respond.) We can make bread, gravy, cookies, crackers, pancakes, waffles, cakes and pies. We can also make a play clay from flour and even paste can be made from flour. How can I do that with just an ordinary bowl of flour? (Let them respond.) We have to add other things to the flour to make different foods from flour. If I had an egg, some milk and a little oil, I can make pancakes. If I add the same things; egg, milk and oil, it can also become cake! Does a cake LOOK like a pancake or TASTE like pancakes? (Let them respond.) No, it doesn't. So what is it that makes it a cake or a pancake? (Let them respond.) It's how many eggs, how much milk and how many spoons of oil that makes it a cake or a pancake. But it all starts with plain, old, ordinary flour!

Now do you think God could do even more with flour. In the Mass I pray to the Father that He send the Spirit to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus. We can't do it but God can. God can come to us in any way the God wants to and therefore we have to respect God when we go to communion. That's why we fast before we receive because we want God to go directly into us and not have to wait for the slushy to go through. We hold our hands in a special way to show it is God's throne. We say AMEN because that goes to show that we believe it is the Body of Christ. We make the sign of the cross before receiving to show our prayerful heart and afterwards to acknowledge that God is the answer to our prayers.

I

Today's celebration focuses on the Gift of the Last Supper, the Gift of the Eucharist. This feast is relatively new in the Church. It was instituted in the thirteenth century through the influence of St. Julianna of Monte Cornellion, sometimes referred to as Julianna of Liege. She was deeply devoted to the Eucharist and wanted others to stop their lives for one day and celebrate this great gift. In 1246, she persuaded her bishop to make this a feast day for the Diocese of Liege. Pope Urban IV declared it a Feast for the entire Church in 1264.

Today's feast is meant to help us grow in the understanding of the Eucharist and in our reverence for this great sacrament. We certainly need this reminder. We have the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle behind our altar, but many times we ignore this Presence and treat the Church merely as a meeting place. We need to genuflect when we enter a pew and then spend a few moments in prayer, recognizing the One before whom we are kneeling.

There are many ways that the Lord is present. He is present in the beauties of nature, and in the smile of a baby. He is present where two or three are gathered together in His Name, and He is present in the Word of Scripture. But the greatest presence of the Lord possible for us on earth is the Real Presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

This is a day for us to reflect on what exactly happens at Mass. Bread and Wine become the Body and Blood of the Lord. They do not symbolically become the Lord. They become the Lord. They do not signify the Lord. They are the Lord. Communion is not just the union of the community. It is the union of the community with Jesus Christ, present in each person who receives communion and present in all of us together. I visited a Diocese once where the Bishop emphasized this by having everyone who receives remain standing and singing until the last person in the community received, and then the entire community knelt together and prayed silently with the One who united them.

When we receive communion we are united through Christ with those present here and those present throughout the world. I knew a young couple who often were apart on Sunday's due to the husband's traveling for work. They used to try to go to Mass at the same time so they could be united together in the Eucharist by the One who united them together in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

There is room for a little Eucharistic theology here, something far deeper than we could present to our little children when they are prepared for their First Holy Communion. At Mass, the substance of the bread and wine are changed, whereas the accidents, the appearance remains the same. Let me try to explain this mystery this way. Many of you have dogs. When you go home, your dog will jump on you, lick you, and act as though you have been away for a month. Of course, if you have a cat, your cat will just ignore you. But back to your dog. You might look at your dog and say something like, "How's my Fuzzy-wuzzy today?" Now what if your dog were to answer, "Well, I'm a bit baffled by the fourth chapter of the third book of Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. I was going over it today. Do you think he developed his concept of analytic and synthetic propositions from Descartes or do you think his thought is rooted in Plato?" You would look at your dog and say, "Fuzzy-wuzzy?" Or you might say, "Immanuel who?" But you would realize that somehow your dog was no longer a dog, but a rationale human being in a dog's form. The rationale human being part is the substance; the dog part is the accidents.

In the Eucharist, the bread and wine looks like bread and wine, and it has all the physical qualities of bread and wine. If you were to look at a consecrated host in a microscope, you would see molecules relative to bread, not human tissue or human

blood, the accidents have not changed. However, the substance has changed; it is now the Body and Blood of Christ.

By the way, last Sunday we celebrated the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity. We recognized that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have the same one substance. They are God. We pray in the creed, consubstantial with the Father, having the same substance. But in the Eucharist the substance changes. The bread and wine become Jesus.

When we receive communion, we receive Jesus. When we approach the Eucharist, we need to do this in a reverential manner, focusing in on the One we are about to receive. It is important for our parents to remind their children continually that they need to receive the Lord with reverence. We need to spend time praying to the Lord within us. These prayers may consist in the communion hymn we share, but should also include quiet time of reflection, time to talk to the Lord within us.

Once the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, they remain the Body and Blood of Christ. That is why we reverence the Blessed Sacrament in our tabernacles. That is why we spend time before the Blessed Sacrament in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel for Eucharistic Adoration.

I am shocked and saddened when I hear about people who leave the Catholic Church and join other faiths. I do not doubt their good intentions. Nor do I doubt that they can have an experience of God's presence in another worshiping community, but how can we, who have been called to the Eucharist, ever leave the Eucharist? Certainly, many good holy people have not been called to the Eucharist. But we have been called. Once we have been admitted into this Presence we cannot leave it. The beliefs of those of other denominations are to be respected. The beliefs of those who do not acknowledge Christ are to be respected. However, we are not respecting others if we hedge on our own faith. No, we need to be who we are. We are Catholics. We need to exalt in that which makes us uniquely Catholic. That is why I am shocked and saddened by Catholics to whom I bring communion on a weekly basis could go eight weeks without communion. You should have been starving and crying out to your nurses for this food that sustains your spiritual life. How could you go so long without Jesus joining himself with you. We need to celebrate the Great, Awesome Gift of the Eucharist.

The Solemnity of the Body and Blood of the Lord reminds us of who we are, who is present in the tabernacles of our churches, and what we are doing when we receive communion.

II

Today we honor our fathers. And that's good. Dads don't get much respect nowadays. A doting father used to sing his little children to sleep. He even learned a few lullabies to lend some variety to the task. This was something he could do at night to help his wife out. And he kept up this task until one night he overheard his four-year-old give her younger sibling this advice, "If you pretend you're asleep," she said, "he stops." That was the end of the lullabies.

Garrison Keillor, on his "Writer's Almanac" on National Public Radio said that Father's Day goes back "to a Sunday morning in May of 1909, when a woman named Sonora Smart Dodd was sitting in church in Spokane, Washington, listening to a Mother's Day sermon. She thought of her father who had raised her and her siblings after her mother died in childbirth, and she thought that fathers should get recognition, too. So she asked the minister of the church if he would deliver a sermon honoring fathers on her father's birthday, which was coming up in June, and the minister did. And the tradition of Father's Day caught on, though rather slowly. Mother's Day became an official holiday in 1914; Father's Day, not until 1972. Mother's Day is still the busiest day of the year for florists, restaurants and long distance phone companies. Father's Day is the day on which the most collect phone calls are made. It is easy to be a Father, it is hard to be a Daddy and harder still to be a Dad.

"It was Strindberg who said, 'That is the thankless position of the father in the family the provider for all and the enemy of all.' Oscar Wilde said, 'Fathers should neither be seen nor heard. That is the only proper basis for family life.'"

When we come back from vacation, our phones are often filled with pictures, and our suitcases are filled with various kinds of souvenirs, many of which make us ask, "Why did I buy this shirt that I don't need and probably will never wear?" But most of all our memories will be filled with tastes, the various foods we have sampled, particularly if we have gone to a different culture. Almost all the scenes we have in our heads will be accompanied by the pasta, paella, panned, or pizza. Our association with these tastes connects us to not only the food, but also the context, the situation.

That food evokes memories was very clear to Jesus. His ministry so often took him around the table, and to sit especially with outsiders and outcasts, eating the drinking with them. The food of Jesus evoked a broader image of the Kingdom, one which sought not to exclude, but to include as many as were hungry. "Do This is memory of Me." So our second reading shows Jesus once again at table, this time for his last meal, but leaving the simple food, the food of sacred meals, bread and wine, as a memorial for him. It is because of this text we have fixed texts for the consecration. They are either from Paul or the Gospels.

But Jesus memorial isn't just of the past, the way we might remember our mother's cooking or an aunt's special cake. Because he rises from the dead, memory is not past: it is also present and also future. Because Jesus, risen from the dead, now lives in the glory of his Father, his memory is God's eternal memory: the ever-living memory of divine life. Jesus gives us this food so we will be part of his timeless and endless life. His covenant is new because it is eternal. **REAL PRESENCE**

But food does more than evoke memories. It gives us energy. When I pour the water into the wine, I say, By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the

divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity. This is to fulfill what is written in 2 Peter 1:4 **so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature. We share in the energy, the grace of the Trinity. Our union with Christ empowers us and transforms us.**The Power of Love.

And this is another dimension of the Eucharist, Jesus' sacred food. We don't share a picture of food. Rich Man Story. When we eat the sacred Bread and drink the blessed cup, we receive the resources to continue the mission of Jesus, to carry out his work. We notice in Luke's account of the feeding in the desert that dramatic moment that frames the Gospel story: the people have been with Jesus all day, they are hungry and tired, and a crisis is brewing. Jesus then turns to his disciples with something like a challenge: you give them something to eat? In the face of their feeling of inadequacy, Jesus teaches them to break and share the bread he provides.

This is another way we can think of ourselves as disciples: to be empowered to feed people who are hungry. When we think about it, most of our lives go into doing this, at least in terms of feeding our families. We all go to work to put, as the saying goes, bread on the table. To bring home the bacon. Yet Jesus challenges us to look at other hungers, to set a table in which many can find a seat. WE can see in Matthew 25 a short list: For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, **a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.*** Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' **He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.'**

Here, it's not merely a question of the hungry in our own super-rich country, as scandalous as that is. Nor only the hungry in other nations, particularly refugees of war and natural disaster. We readily open our checkbooks for that. But what about the other hungers people have: for friendship, for emotional support, for hope, and, particularly today, **for faith**? People hunger not only in body, but also in spirit. And here many of us, because of our faith, can be a means through which God alleviates human needs.

As disciples, every one of us has been touched by Christ. As disciples, every one of us is equipped to notice the hurts and isolation of others. As people fed regularly by Christ, every one of us is equipped to reach out, to strengthen, to connect, to forgive, to help restore a sister or brother in spiritual hunger. Every one of us has the ability to feed another from our faith, our hope, and our love.

"You give them something to eat?" That's Jesus' challenge to his disciples, and also his challenge to us. To remember Christ, to acknowledge his presence, means carrying out his mission in our daily lives.

III Fr Desiano

The Body and Blood of Christ A

Like the Jewish people of old, we have very mixed feelings about the “manna” in our lives.

Our first reading gives us an idea of this manna. The Jewish people were on the move, away from Egypt, the land of slavery which they still missed; they were traveling through the desert for an undetermined amount of time. When they didn't have their regular food, God sent them manna, a strange kind of grain, to sustain them. It sustained them until they reached the Promised Land where they could produce their own grain once again.

I don't think it's much of a stretch to think of what we've been through as something like the desert. In our homes, our regular food routines have been disrupted, even our shopping routines. And certainly getting anything from a restaurant, or even a fast-food chain, has become a multi-step chore.

But particularly when it comes to our worship, with the Eucharist at the center, we have been walking in a desert. We have been deprived of the chance to come together as a family, to hear our readings proclaimed, to share in the Eucharistic Prayer, and to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, whose feast we celebrate today.

Yet God did send us manna, another kind of food that sustained us in our faith, although we preferred more. God sent us multiple live streams of the Mass, homilies from virtually any church in America. God sent us the challenge to form a center of our own faith life by period of prayer and meditation. God sent us the opportunities, which many of us exercised, to pray with our families at home, to share our faith directly.

Just as the Jewish people were tempted to forget, or even disparage, the gift of manna, we are tempted to want to “open everything up” so it returns to the way it was. And, in doing this, we are also tempted to overlook the kind of daily bread, the kind of everyday spirituality, which is as much a part of our faith lives as our ability to go to Mass. For, in this pandemic, we learned that part of what the Sacrament of the Mass means is that the Eucharist is to help us see how God is always feeding us, sharing our lives, and bringing us into union. The Sacrament shows us what our faith lives are about.

As precious as the Eucharist, our central Sacrament, is, it, in itself, is ultimately also a form of manna—a sign pointing to the fullness of life that God promises and is bringing about in our lives. Paul calls the food we take a participation in the Lord's Body and Blood, a form of living which shows itself in the love we have for each other. And Jesus tells us in the Gospel the Bread he gives us finds its meaning in our eternal life. Jesus sustains us just as the Father sustain him so that we can begin living eternal life even as we journey through life.

God always sustains us, especially at those moments when we feel most abandoned and confused. He gives us bread from heaven, “manna,” to support us on our journeys. Our Catholic lives are filled with these forms of support, whether in our everyday spirituality which affirms us in God's life, or in the

Sacrament of the Eucharist, or in the ultimate promise of the fullness of life which is our goal. God always sustains us so long as we learn what our true hungers are, and how we need to be fed.