I

Children

**1. Communion is a holy meal, not a *Happy Meal*.**
Although as a holy meal it can certainly make you happy.

**2. Communion is not a snack.**
We don’t take communion just because we’re hungry in the middle of the service. That’s what Goldfish during Sunday school are for. It’s a meal for the soul, not the body.

**3. Communion is not a to-go meal.**
Finish it at the communion rail. There are no communion doggie bags.

**4. There is no “kids’ table” at church.**
Everyone, regardless of age, is welcome to receive at the Lord’s Table.

**5. Communion connects us to Jesus**.

**6. Communion connects us to the disciples at the Last Supper.**
And it connects us to everyone who, like us, have followed Jesus for hundreds and thousands of years.

**7. Take, Bless, Break, Give.**
That’s the four-fold action of the Eucharist. Start chanting!

**8. A priest can’t to do this by him/herself.**
Being a priest is like having a super power you can only use when you share it. Unless you’re here, I can’t celebrate communion. The priest needs you!

**9. The ordinary becomes extraordinary.**
Through the priest’s prayers and your participation, ordinary bread and wine become extraordinary. Amen.

**10. The word “communion” means connection.**
When we take communion, our connection to, or relationship with Jesus and one another is made stronger.

Adult

One of my close relatives is a convert to the Catholic Church. When she is asked why she became a Catholic, and remains a Catholic despite scandals and the attacks of the culture, she always answers the same way: John 6. Raised in a Protestant denomination, and very familiar with both Old and New Testaments, she was always a little shaken when her congregation “took communion,” once a month. The pastor would say something like, “of course this is not the body and blood of Jesus, but only a symbol.” Every time she picked up the Gospel of John, she would see Christ’s words: “he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever.” (Jn 6:54–58) And, in her mind and mine, Jesus either meant what He said or was overtly lying, so the true Church had to be the one that consistently said from the beginning that “their” Eucharist was and is truly the Body and Blood of Christ, physically present and available for our nourishment.

Jesus asks something absurd in today’s Gospel. He asks us to eat his flesh, and drink his blood. To make it worse, he says: “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.” So it is imperative to eat his flesh, and drink his blood! But how can this be? Jesus has ascended into heaven. He is not here. Of course, the answer is in the second reading when Saint Paul says: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” Jesus gave us his Body and Blood under the form of bread and wine. But make no mistake: the Eucharist we are going to receive in a few minutes is in fact the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. At the Last Supper, Jesus said the bread and wine would be transformed. And so it is. But today we live in a culture that says the material world is all there is, that spiritual things are just imaginary. Yet, we profess belief in “all things, seen and unseen.” We know that spiritual things are real. But sometimes, we can doubt it: Is the bread and wine actually transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ?

In times of doubt, it is good to recall what happened to Hermann Cohen. Born in 1821 in Germany, Hermann learned how to play piano at the age of 4, and soon became a piano virtuoso, and an intellectual genius. By the age of 14, he was touring the great concert halls of Europe, and was adored by the public. Hermann was not religious, and soon fell into a very self-indulgent and sinful lifestyle. Addicted to gambling, and other vices, he was described as vain, and his behavior as depraved. But at the age of 26, he was asked by a friend to conduct a Church choir for a Eucharistic celebration. Having debts to pay, he accepted. During the service, Cohen felt strangely moved as the people prayed. Near the end, his gaze fell on the altar where there was a monstrance holding the Blessed Sacrament. When the celebrant raised the monstrance to bless the people, all fell reverently to their knees. Hermann felt compelled to bow down. He felt intense pain that this was not for him and, at the same time, a joyous hope. On leaving the church, he was euphoric. He thought the feelings would pass, but instead his sinful passions began to decrease. The following Friday he felt compelled to go to the church. During the blessing he burst into tears. On gazing at the Host, he experienced the presence of the Loving God. In the following days, feeling drawn by a strange, sweet power, he went back to the church. Finally, he dropped to his knees without knowing whom he was kneeling before, and prayed, “Who are you, Lord? What am I to do?” Soon he was attending Mass frequently, and he wept as others received communion. A few months later, he was touring in Germany and went to a small Catholic Church to attend Mass. This is how he describes what happened:

The singing and the palpable presence of supernatural power caused me to break out into fits of trembling. I felt both disturbed and moved. During the moment of transubstantiation, I was suddenly conscious of tears flowing from my eyes. God’s grace in all its strength poured over me. . . . As I dissolved into tears, I was seized by a sharp sense of remorse for my past life. And suddenly, under divine inspiration, I made a general confession before God of all the sins I had committed in my life. I saw my faults before me, multiplied by a thousand, hideous and repulsive, inviting God’s wrath. . . . And once again I felt a strange sense of peace, which poured over my soul like an oil of gladness — gladness that the merciful God would forgive me everything and, overlooking my crimes, have pity on me because of my remorse and bitter pain. . . . Yes, I felt that he would forgive me, and in a spirit of thanksgiving, I resolved that I would love him above all things, and convert. On leaving the church in Ems, I was as Christian as it was possible for an unbaptized person to be.

Hermann Cohen sought and received baptism and the Eucharist. The former carousing playboy, and celebrated artist, became a joyful adherent of Christ. He eventually entered the seminary and became Father Hermann Cohen. Armed with the Eucharist, and in union with Mary, he formed a society dedicated to the nocturnal adoration of the Blessed Sacrament so that Jesus may be adored 24/7.

We all should love Jesus in the Eucharist, and receive him with great desire. But sometimes we don’t perceive him there. Our vision is clouded and our senses dulled by sin. That is why we must confess our sins and receive God’s absolution. Confession prepares us to receive the Eucharist in a state of grace, and when that happens, we will experience God’s love at each communion. Then, we will agree with Father Hermann Cohen, who one said, “I should like the Eucharist to become a burning flame for your soul, so that, immersed in that flame, it might emerge burning with love and great-heartedness. I should like to see this Eucharistic altar, on which Jesus is sacrificed, accept your offering too, so that you may become a victim of love, whose perfume rises to the throne of the Eternal God!”

II

On December 4, 1912, shortly after four o’clock in the morning, a fire broke out in the basement of St. Philip Neri Church in the Bronx, New York. In very little time, the entire church building was engulfed in flames. Thankfully, a passerby noticed what was happening and summoned the priests and the fire department. The two parish priests — Fr. Daniel Burke and Fr. Joseph Congedo — arrived on the scene, and one can only imagine what it was like for them to see their beloved church engulfed in flames.[2](https://www.hprweb.com/2023/05/homilies-for-june-2023/#fn-29924-2)

What happened next, on a purely rational level, doesn’t make much sense: the two priests rushed into the burning church. Why would someone do that? Why on earth would these two priests dare to enter where even firefighters were reluctant to go? We come to realize that it was not what these priests risked their lives to save, but who. There was someone inside whom they loved. A New York Times article published the following day tells the story: “Groping through the smoke, [the two priests] made their way to the altar and emerged a few moments later bearing the Host.”[3](https://www.hprweb.com/2023/05/homilies-for-june-2023/#fn-29924-3) It was not whatwas inside, but who, and that “who” was Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Eucharist.

In an age where everything seems upside down, where it can seem like there is more evil in the world than good, people may ask, “Where is God?” We can rightly point to the many ways that God comes to us: within each one of us, in his Word in Sacred Scripture, in the beauty of the world that he has created, and in so many other ways. In their recent document, The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church,the U.S. Bishops reflect, “The Lord accompanies us in many ways, but none as profound as when we encounter him in the Eucharist. On our journey toward eternal life, Christ nourishes us with his very self.”[4](https://www.hprweb.com/2023/05/homilies-for-june-2023/#fn-29924-4)Christ was present in the tabernacle of that burning St. Philip Neri Church in the Bronx. Christ is present in the tabernacles of big and grand churches that everyone has heard of, like St. Peter’s Basilica. Christ is present in the tabernacles of tiny mission chapels in places that almost no one has heard of. Christ is present in the tabernacles of our parish Churches and on the altar each and every time Mass is celebrated.

So where is God? He is in our midst; we might say that he is in humble disguise. “Your God is there, in what looks like bread and wine?” someone might ask. “Yes,” we would respond, because Jesus wanted to come to us in a way that we could understand, in a way we were familiar with, in a way we could receive. The Eucharist is not a what; it is a who. It is Jesus who loves us, and he asks only that we would love Him in return. When you love someone, you would run into a burning building to save that person, like those priests in 1912. When you love someone, you would rearrange your schedule to spend time with them, like we Catholics do on Sundays. When you love someone, you would go out of your way to show in little ways that you care, like we Catholics do by genuflecting toward the tabernacle and by bowing before receiving Communion. When you love someone, you cannot stay apart. As we thank Jesus for coming to us in his Body and Blood at every Mass, how could we possibly stay away?

On this Corpus Christi Sunday, we should remember that the Eucharist comes to us through the priesthood. If these years of Eucharistic Revival in the United States are to bear fruit, we must accompany our Eucharistic devotion with prayers for an increase in priestly vocations in this country and around the world. No priest? No Eucharist. Where do priests come from? (Unfortunately, they do not grow on trees.) Priests come from families. In our local Catholic communities, especially in our parishes, we need to quit thinking that priests come from other people’s families. We are destined to continue to have a “vocations crisis” until we begin to realize that priests can come from our families, from our parishes, from among our sons, grandsons, relatives, and friends.

May God give us priests from our families so that the Eucharist may always and everywhere be celebrated, so that we don’t have to look far to say, “There on that altar, there in that tabernacle — there is God.” You would not run into a burning building for something, but you would for someone, to save someone you love. Fr. Burke and Fr. Congedo ran into St. Philip Neri Church in spite of the flames because they themselves were interiorly on fire with a love for Jesus in the Eucharist. May God send us good and holy priests to bring us the Eucharist, and may the Eucharist that we celebrate and receive this day set each of us on fire with a love for Christ, whom we bring in his Eucharistic Body into the streets of our towns and cities, that he may be always and everywhere praised, adored, and loved.

III

No one likes being hungry. Whenever you’re hungry, it’s your body telling you that something is lacking, something is missing, and something needs to be done about it. The feeling naturally moves us to get rid of it — I want to eat so that I can get rid of the hunger. I’d be willing to bet that on a daily basis, most of us experience that feeling of hunger — perhaps like the crowd in the Gospel today who followed Jesus into a deserted place. They were hungry, I’m sure.

But I think we can all agree that there’s a hunger that we feel that can be more than physical — it’s a spiritual hunger, a spiritual longing for something more. That’s the hunger I want to focus on today. I’d imagine that at least some of us are at Mass today because of that hunger. We recognize that something’s missing in our lives, there’s some lack, and we are looking somewhere — perhaps the only place we know — to fill that desire. The people in the Gospel today, I am sure, experienced physical hunger as the day drew to its end and there was no food in sight. But I’d also imagine that they experienced a spiritual hunger that brought them out to the middle of nowhere to hear a wandering preacher, to witness the healings that He was working. They wanted more in their lives, and maybe, just maybe, He could do something about it.

Fr. Thomas Dubay, a great spiritual writer, describes man as an “incarnated thirst,” “a thirst in the flesh.” He says that we can’t help but seek the thing that we thirst for, that we hunger for, in some attempt to satisfy that desire. I’d argue that almost everything we do, everything we seek, is because of that hunger. That’s a good thing — that’s how God created us. The problem is not that we desire too much, though; it’s that we desire too little. We shrink our desires and settle for things that still leave us longing for more. That person, that item, that next great feeling. The prophet Isaiah pointedly writes to the people of Israel, and to us, if we are honest, “Why do you spend and labor and work for that which does not satisfy?” Why do we seek to satisfy the hunger again and again down dead end roads, hoping that this time will be different?

So what does satisfy that hunger? We might put different words to it: happiness, meaning, purpose, fulfillment. But the final answer to that question, the One that includes all of those things and more than we could ever imagine, is God. He is the only one who can satisfy that “incarnated thirst” that we all are. Other things might appear to satisfy for a while, but it’ll never be enough. Only He does. That’s what Jesus offers to those people — an abundance, where perhaps they thought there was nothing.

And that’s what He offers to us — something more than we could ever have imagined. As St. Paul tells us in the Second Reading, as the Gospels tell us, as the Church has done since the very beginning — Jesus offers us Himself. “This is My Body, given for you. This is My Blood, poured out for you.” In this place, at this Mass, we come face to face with the only Person who can satisfy the hunger of our hearts. At first glance, that might seem disappointing — it looks like a piece of bread, and maybe it doesn’t seem to have any concrete impact on my life. In the gospel, the apostles’ first thought was to use human means to satisfy the problem. But Jesus is working on a different perspective. He invites us not to fix but to trust. He invites us to look with the eyes of faith and to hear the truth of His words that we hear at every Mass: “This is truly My Flesh, given for you.” He invites us to give Him a chance to satisfy that desire of our hearts. It’s what the Church has done and has held onto faithfully from the very beginning because she has held faithfully to that promise of Jesus. The presence of the Eucharist, the true Body and Blood, is what makes the Church, is what defines our faith, and is what will endure to the very end.

It’s no secret that faith in the Eucharist in our world isn’t the strongest. Our own American church is taking great steps in the next three years to revive that faith — not by disseminating detailed arguments or proofs, but by inviting people to take a step of faith, to believe that just maybe, He can fill that hunger of your heart. If we give Him a chance, He will not let us down. As He comes into this place today, give Him the chance to satisfy.

IV

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 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 is 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 week 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.

V
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, panced, 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 eve-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.

VI 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 to 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.**