

## HOMILY CORPUS CHRISTI YRA 2017

When my niece Delaney Doris was younger, she went through that stage that she did not want to go to bed alone. She was afraid of the dark and all of that. So my sister, Lynn used to lay down with her until she fell asleep. Lynn wanted to stop doing that so one night when she was lying with her, they prayed together, which they always do, and then Lynn said: “Delaney, you know you are never alone. Jesus is always with you watching over you and protecting you. Nothing bad will happen to you.” Delaney thought about it for a minute and then said: “I know, but I need somebody with skin!” I get that. Sometimes we do need somebody with skin, somebody with us physically.

Today we celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of Christ. It is in the Eucharist that Jesus is with us physically. As human beings we are made up of body and soul, we are physical and spiritual. God created our human nature and knows us very well. I think he gave us the Eucharist because he knew we needed him to be with us physically and spiritually. Jesus is very clear in the Gospel reading. In the Eucharist the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. That is what we believe as Catholics, and we are called to receive the Eucharist regularly. But the Eucharist is also part of something bigger. As Catholics, we have churches that are sacred spaces. They become sacred spaces because the Blessed Sacrament is kept on reserve in the church. That is what makes it a sacred space, a physical place where we can find Jesus present. We also create a sacred environment in church. That is why I am so particular about what we do with the space in the church. We have stained glass. We have depictions in the sanctuary of the Resurrection, the Road to Emmaus, the Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It reminds us of all of those important events. We have added a statue of the Blessed Mother. We added candle banks, so you can light a candle for a particular intention and pray for the person in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. We have

more realistic Stations of the Cross to remind us of all of those important events on the way to Calvary. The color and lighting was carefully chosen to make this space warm and welcoming. Art and Environment is very careful to tastefully decorate the church. I went to a service at Northridge, one of the mega churches in Plymouth to see what I could learn from them. Their worship space is an auditorium, with theatre seats, cup holders for your latte or your beverage of choice and a stage with 7 or 8 TV screens projecting all kinds of stuff. There is no sense of this being a sacred space. People I have talked to who have come back to the Catholic Church have told me that they missed the Eucharist and this sense of sacred space. There are things we can learn from the mega churches, but worship space is not one of them.

But the Eucharist is bigger than that. We receive the Eucharist as part of a Eucharistic celebration. We gather together to pray and sing and give glory and praise to God. We hear readings from Sacred Scripture and talk about them. We form a big Eucharistic procession and respond with an Amen to “The Body of Christ” and “The Blood of Christ,” proclaiming our belief in the real presence. We always receive the Eucharist from another human being. Only the priest self communicates. They were trying to market something several years ago. It was a cellophane packet with one host and a little container of wine and a napkin. Nothing could be more sterile, but we receive from a common cup, common ciborium as one body of Christ. It is not just receiving the Eucharist that is important; if it were we could forget all of this and just have a drive thru. It is also important to be a member of the Catholic Church with some external morals and values. If we just decide what the truth is, and what moral behavior is for ourselves, I think that is when we get in trouble. Certainly we need to form our own conscience, but there is great wisdom in the teachings of the Catholic Church that developed over 2,000 years. We cannot be too quick to throw that out. And once we receive the Body and Blood of Christ we

become what we receive. Our souls are nourished and we can share Jesus with the greater community.

As my niece would say, we need somebody with skin. We need to receive the Eucharist. We need for Jesus to be with us in physical form. We need to have a sacred space where we can join with a community of believers to give glory and praise to God, and to learn Catholic values and teachings. The God who is everywhere can also be the God who is nowhere. God is here in the Eucharist, in the Sacred Scripture and in the congregation. God is here.