

# HOMILY CORPUS CHRISTI

**June 14, 2020**

Today we celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi. We celebrate the Eucharist, the fact that the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ at every Mass. I have been reflecting this week about our celebration of the Mass over the past 3 months. Jesus should be present in 4 ways at every Mass. Jesus is present in the Eucharist, we can receive Jesus in a way that we can see and taste and touch. Jesus is also present in the priest, who acts in persona Christi, in the person of Christ, so that this sacred mystery can happen. Jesus is present in the Word of God, in Sacred Scripture. He is present in the congregation of believers that gather to worship God and to and love and serve one another. Our liturgy is very rich and filled with Tradition and meaning. I have come to appreciate that Jesus must be present in all 4 ways in order for the Mass to be complete.

Back in March we stopped having public Masses. Archbishop Vigneron asked that priests celebrate a private Mass each day during that time. I did as he asked, but the Mass was not much of a celebration and it was not very spiritually fulfilling. I am a priest and I was present. I read the word of God and I received the Body and Blood of Christ, but without all of you present, something very important was missing. The Mass is a communal celebration not a form of personal prayer. For Easter, we started doing the video Mass. Again without a congregation the Mass still seemed incomplete. A number of people suggested that I tape pictures of Parishioners to the pews, but that would just not do it! You have to be here physically and spiritually! And many of you

are watching the video Mass and you have told me that you appreciate that, but you miss receiving the Eucharist and you miss joining together as a congregation. We launch the video Mass at 10:00 am on Face book and at 11:00 AM on YouTube, so at least you have the sense that you are watching and praying at the same time, but it is not enough. Now we have started public Masses, but many vulnerable people cannot come because it is not safe for them. Did you ever think you would be afraid to come to Mass? And for those who come, how much can we love and support one another with masks and social distancing. In the past, did you undervalue the opportunity to become part of a Catholic community? When we get through this, we have to remember that Jesus must be present in all 4 ways at every Mass.

And I wonder what the Church is going to look like within the next 5 years. Did you know that half of the priests in the Archdiocese of Detroit are 65 years of age or older? 70 years of age is the retirement age for priests. I am thankful that many of the priests of the Archdiocese are willing to continue doing ministry after retirement age, but how much can we expect them to do in their 70's and 80's and 90's? And finances are a problem as well. I am very thankful to all of you and your support and commitment to St. Edith Parish. We are doing well financially due to your generosity, but that is not true in the Archdiocese as a whole. Many parishes in the Archdiocese cannot pay their bills. None of this is new. It has been developing over many years. But in the midst of this pandemic it has become obvious that we cannot ignore it anymore. Archbishop Vigneron announced a new program. Families of 3 to 6 parishes will be formed. This is an attempt to address the priest shortage and the financial

problems in the Archdiocese. Beyond this, no one knows what this will look like. The priests gathered on Zoom and were able to ask some questions, but the answer to most of them was we do not know. We will have to figure that out.

Maybe we needed the pandemic to force us to look at the problems in the Church that have been present for a long time. I am very fortunate to be here at St. Edith Parish with the committed Parish Family that we have. We have a great staff at the Parish and at the school. We have a great Parish Council. We met by Zoom last week, and all of the members agreed to serve another year. We also have a great Finance Council and strong Commissions that are willing to get involved and be part of the solution. I am not sure what the Church is going to look like in 5 years, but I know we will be able to work through it together. And I hope we all have a greater appreciation of our Eucharistic celebrations and how important they are in the life of our Parish family. I am looking forward to the day when Jesus is completely present in all 4 ways at each Mass, in the Word of God, in the Eucharist, in the Priest and in the congregation of believers.