

HOMILY ~ JUNE 5/6, 2021
CORPUS CHRISTI

Today we celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi, or the Body and Blood of Christ. I have been thinking a lot about blood this week. It really means life. My Mother had leukemia, and I can remember taking her to the hospital emergency room for a blood transfusion. After the transfusion, she was able to walk to the parking ramp with me. It was new life for her every time she received a transfusion. It is truly a gift from God. We cannot produce blood in the laboratory. It comes to each of us from God. Until about a generation or two ago, the end of life used to be marked when the heart stopped beating and the blood stopped flowing through our veins. Now we can keep the heart beating artificially, so we now look at brain waves to mark the end of life.

Blood meant life for the people in biblical times. In the First Reading, we see how the covenant made with God through Moses was sealed with blood. Moses sprinkled blood on the altar and on the people. In the Second Reading, we hear how the new covenant with Jesus was sealed with his blood. He shed his own blood for our salvation. In the Gospel Reading, we hear an account of the Last Supper. This took place on the Jewish feast of Passover, which is the great feast of liberation of the Jewish people from slavery. The blood on the doorpost of the Jewish people gave them life. Jesus gave us the Eucharist; and every time we celebrate Mass, we make the sacrifice that Jesus made for us present again without the pain, the angry crowds and the agony. We receive the Body and Blood of Christ. We are joined with Jesus in new life.

The other thing that I have noticed about blood is that it is the one thing that we all share in common. While there are several different blood types, all human beings share the same blood types. Blood types do not distinguish by race, nationality, sex,

sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, democrat or republican of any of the differences that we have come to believe separate us. When we receive the Eucharist, we are all joined in the same new life with Jesus Christ. We all belong here. We all belong to God, and we all belong to each other. The Mass is a kind of sacred meal. 2,000 years ago, the Jewish people ate and drank from common cups and bowls. Sharing a meal together represented friendship and commitment to the people that they dined with. That is why we receive the precious blood from a common cup today. We have not been able to do this recently because of COVID; however, I believe that we will eventually go back to this practice. Some of the Protestant religions distribute communion using separate little cups. I guess it could be considered more hygienic; however, something is lost. I think it loses the representation that we are all connected and committed to one another in friendship. Through the Eucharist, we are all part of the Mystical Body of Christ.

We are all bound together by blood and by the Eucharist. What holds us together as a family is not how we vote or our position on individual issues. We share a common faith in Jesus Christ. Love and respect can transcend our differences. We can begin healing the uncivil war that is going on in our country not by changing each other's minds, but by meeting and discussing issues unarmed. We are part of the Mystical Body of Christ. We belong to God, and we belong to each other. As we move out of this pandemic, let's reestablish all of the bonds we had before all of this happened. The isolation has not been good for any of us. We need to join together again as one family in Jesus Christ.