

HOMILY ~ CORPUS CHRISTI JUNE 18-19, 2022

Let's talk about miracles today. How many people here believe in miracles? I consulted the Oxford Dictionary where a miracle is defined as: "*A surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific law and is, therefore, considered to be the work of a divine agency.*" That seems like a good definition, so let's go with that. In the Gospel Reading today, we have an account of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. Here we have over 5,000 people gathered in a deserted place. They were hungry. The disciples have concluded that there is no way that they can feed all of these people, and they want to send them to the surrounding villages to find their own provisions. Jesus tells them to feed the people themselves; and starting with five loaves and two fish, they were able to feed the people with an abundance of food with 12 wicker baskets of leftovers. The event is surprising and welcome, it is not explicable by natural or scientific law, and we consider it the work of Jesus, who we consider a divine agency. We believe that Jesus is God. We believe that this is a miracle because we have faith.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi. As Catholics, we believe that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ during the Eucharistic Prayer. We believe in the real presence. We do not believe that this is symbolic of the body and blood of Christ; we believe that this is the body and blood of Christ. This is a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific law and we believe that it is the work of God. I think it meets our definition of a miracle. And we believe this because we have faith. Did you ever doubt that this is true? I must admit that I have had my days. That is why we study theology. According to St. Augustine, theology is faith seeking understanding. We believe in order to understand, and we understand in order to believe. It is not explainable by natural or scientific law, but we have reason to believe. Let me share the understanding that convinced me.

I believe that Jesus is God. There is pretty clear proof that Jesus was a real person who walked the earth 2,000 years ago. Even many non-Christian religions acknowledge that Jesus existed; they just do not believe that he is God. There are many accounts in the Gospels of the miracles Jesus performed, evidence that Jesus is God. We have accounts of the post Resurrection appearances of Jesus, more evidence that Jesus is God.

Now I suppose the 12 apostles could have all gotten together and made up these stories, that is possible; but 11 out of 12 apostles were martyred for their faith. Would you be willing to give up your life for something you made up, something you know is not true? So I believe the Gospel accounts. Jesus is very clear at the Last Supper. He says: *"This is my body, this is my blood."* He does not say this is like my body and blood or this is symbolic of my body and blood. He says: *"This is my body and blood."* We also hear these same words in the Second Reading: *"This is my body, this is my blood."* These words were very well known from the days of the early church and have always been used at Eucharistic celebrations. I believe Jesus meant what he said and so have millions of people for 2,000 years. The Church gave a philosophical explanation using ancient Greek philosophy. This is called transubstantiation. The matter of the bread and wine remains the same, but the form becomes the body and blood of Jesus. I don't know how convincing this is today because most of us no longer study ancient Greek philosophy, but it is faith seeking understanding.

The Eucharist has drawn millions and millions of people together for 2,000 years, and people's lives are better because of it. The theology of receiving the Eucharist has always remained the same. The preferred method of receiving the Eucharist has always been within the Mass. Bringing people together is extremely important. And no one, except the priest, self communicates. There is a very human connection in receiving the Eucharist. People who cannot attend Mass are also receiving from another human being. I believe something very powerful happens at every Mass because Jesus is present in the Eucharist, in the Word of God that is proclaimed at every Mass, in the congregation and in the priest. People who attend Mass regularly have their lives transformed. I have seen it, and I have experienced it. How many people here today have experienced it? How are we going to let the people know who are not here? That is my faith seeking understanding. I believe in order to understand, and I understand in order to believe.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim