

## **FR. JOHN'S HOMILY**

### **Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 25, 2021**

I played golf recently with an old college friend who invited one of his friends to join us. They are both very devoted and dedicated men of faith of a different denomination. We came to a moment of slow playing that happens at times on a golf course. So while waiting, I get asked this question, "Father, did you hear that the President is coming into town to campaign for the Democratic Party? We heard that some of his staff was asking about some Catholic churches to attend; Holy Souls was mentioned. What are you going to do when he comes to your church, and at Communion time?" It took a second, but I realized he was making it up, but I also wondered, what will I do? I said, "At this moment, I am going to tee this ball up, and do my best to beat you."

This wasn't the time to talk about this matter, something most sacred and holy. This belief is the source and summit of our Faith. This mystery of our Faith makes us who we are. It is a question that is before us all these days. Now these friends, who were not Catholic, were wondering how I would respond to the question. They have heard, along with everyone else about the latest topics that our Bishops are discussing, because it is in the news. It seems that our teachings about the Eucharist and Communion is of interest to many.

What would I do? What would you want me to do? What would you do? What witness are we going to give to the world about this sacred and holy belief of ours? This witness will speak volumes, not only to our own Catholic Church, but to others who are waiting and watching us well.

The question is before the USCCB, and they will be addressing the "meaning of the Eucharist in the life of the church". Their reasoning is that it is time to have teachings on the Eucharist necessary when Catholics are returning to regular Mass attendance as pandemic restrictions ease. Many have not returned, and the Eucharist is no longer a significant part of their lives. Many no longer believe in Jesus and the real Presence. The Bishops are right - it is time for us to reflect more deeply on the Eucharist. The outline of their topics are: "The Eucharist, A Mystery to be Believed," "The Eucharist, A Mystery to be Celebrated" and "The Eucharist, A Mystery to be Lived." This mission that our Shepherds are undertaking is of great importance; let's keep them in our prayers.

In the meantime, now until the end of August, we will be looking at John's Gospel Chapter 6, about the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and the Bread of Life Discourses. The fourth gospel differs from Matthew, Mark and Luke which are known as the Synoptic Gospels. John's Gospel centers on the Divinity of Jesus, He is the Son of God. He writes with lofty and symbolic language.

In John's Gospel, Jesus explains the miracle of the multiplication more so than in any of the other gospels.

So I encourage us all to take some time in the weeks ahead to read John's Gospel Chapter 6, to give it a prayerful reflection. Take some time to study the Catechism, the chapter on the Sacraments, especially article 3 - The Sacrament of the Eucharist. Check out the many resources that are available at our fingertips today: books, CD's, podcast, webinars, etc.....

The multiplication of the loaves and fishes is the only miracle story that John shares with the other gospels. The signs in John's Gospel point to who Jesus is, the one sent by the Father. John tells us these events take place just before the feast of Passover, (perpetual memorial meal of the sacrificial lamb, celebrating Hebrews freedom and redemption). Thereby he invites us to make a

connection with that founding story of the Israelites when God fed them in the wilderness. And what happens on this hillside when the boy brings five 'barley loaves' which was the bread of the poor. What the little boy gave Jesus that day was all he had; that was his food for the day. Finally, we are told that twelve baskets of scraps are gathered up. The connection with the twelve tribes of Israel, and now the twelve apostles and twelve baskets symbolizing fulfillment and completion. Jesus' desire to gather to himself a new people of God, the body of Christ, the Church, you and me.

The providential nourishment of God's people begins with the manna and quail of the Exodus (Chapter 16). There is an Elijah – Elisha cycle of miracle story of the feeding of the widow and her son with Elijah and the story today of the man from Baal-shalishah, 20 barley loaves and the feeding of the 100 men through Elisha. Miracle stories of feeding that cannot be explained naturally. It is about God's providential love and care of us as His people. It is about what God has done, what God is doing, and what God wants to do for us. All He needs is our little offerings from his people.

Before us at each Mass is the Presence of Jesus. Which I reminded us of last week, He is our Healing Remedy for the brokenness in our lives, our families, our church, our world. Our Healer and Redeemer is before us at every Mass, and what does that mean when we hear, "The Body of Christ". In response we say, Amen. Meaning that the one who professes Amen believes this is Jesus, the Son of the living God. This is why we do not have open communion (Belief) and is a reminder to us that our hearts have to be ready to receive (No Mortal Sin). This is a great gift, a treasure beyond all treasures, that we partake in. What does it mean for ourselves to receive Jesus?

It is the same Jesus, who healed the leper, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, restoration to the paralytic and the lame, forgiveness to the sinners, recognition to the tax collectors, women, and children, freedom for those in bondage, mercy to condemned criminals, and life to the dead.

What will I do? I will do as I do every Mass, hold up Jesus, and say "The Body of Christ", and you say "Amen". That Amen, means you believe this is Jesus, his real presence, body and blood, soul and divinity. And you receive the Bread of Life, into your heart and we are called to become the bread we eat.

And if that one before the Lord is more conservative or liberal than me, they hear "The Body of Christ" and then say "Amen." They receive. If one before the Lord has different views about human life than I, I will say before them: "The Body of Christ." They say "Amen" and they receive. And if that one before the Lord is dealing with addictions of any kind, before them I will say: "The Body of Christ." They say "Amen" and they receive. And if one before the Lord is dealing with past physical, sexual, mental abuse, I will say, "The Body of Christ." They say "Amen" and they receive. And if the one before the Lord has tremendous fear, worry and anxiety, I will say: "The Body of Christ." They say "Amen" and they receive. And if that one before the Lord has lost their faith, no longer prays, or not sure what they believe: I will say, "The Body of Christ." They say, "Amen" and they receive.

You will hear, "The Body of Christ," you will say "Amen." You receive the Bread of Life, what will you do with Him whom you just received?