

Sunday Homily

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ – A

May 25, 2008

By Deacon Jeff Claar

Today at this Mass, we are happy to honor and celebrate all our parish high school seniors who are graduating and entering a more adult phase of life when all things seem possible. Indeed, your wider parish family joins with your family and friends in offering our continued love, prayers and support as you reach for your summit in life.

We are all on the great journey of life and every journey must have a source and a summit. The source is where something begins, and the summit is the ultimate destination of fulfillment.

Imagine for a moment your own journey and its summit. What is your dream? How far can you go? If I were to ask you to write down your life's summit, what might it be? Maybe you would say you want to be a millionaire. Maybe you want to be a good wife and mother, or a good husband and father. Maybe you simply want to be known as a good person.

Yes, these are all good things, but could there be an even higher summit?

Is it possible that there are others who have already achieved your goal of being a millionaire, a mother, an oceanographer, or a teacher who are completely miserable with their lives? If so, it doesn't really sound like the ultimate summit we hoped for does it?

Why is that? How can all these good things be so attractive and so empty at the same time? Maybe there really is something more, something better. Well, with the big questions of life, it is always good to see what God has to say.

If we listen to the revealed truth of Jesus Christ as given to us through Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, the true source and summit of our faith and our lives is not a what, but a who.

The source and summit of our lives is Jesus Christ, really and truly present, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist at Mass! And Christ is truly present in the Eucharist so that God's divine plan for our salvation can become a reality. You see, our ultimate summit, our biggest goal is to be a saint in Heaven with our one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit! That is the real summit we should be striving for!

All the rest of it is just steps on the stairway to Heaven.

Now seniors, you are all moving on to something new, whether that is work, the military, or college and wherever you go you will hear, see, and read things that others believe. And some have made it their mission in life to convince you they are right. So to arm you for the battle, let me review for you just exactly what Jesus Christ taught us about the Eucharist.

First, when Jesus said "eat my body and drink my blood" he was speaking literally, not symbolically. Remember that many of His followers questioned Him, and when He restated this clearly, they couldn't believe it and left Him. Today is no different; only we in the Catholic Church still believe exactly what Jesus taught about the Eucharist. And for 2000 years since the time of the Apostles, we have taught this unchanging truth. People have always found this mystery hard to believe and they always will. Again today, we heard St. Paul remind those living in Corinth that yes, the cup we bless is the blood of Christ, and the bread we break is the body of Christ.

Second, Jesus loves you so much that it is His plan to be present to you not just in a book or as an idea, but really physically present in the Eucharist. Because He loves you, He wants to be physically with you often, every Sunday in fact. This is His plan, not the Church's, when He tells us to keep holy the Sabbath.

When we love someone we want to be with them as often as possible don't we? Would you even consider going months or years without being physically present to those you love? If you did this, it would send a pretty clear message to those ignored wouldn't it? Jesus Christ loves you and is asking for your time and your presence too; you just need to decide if He is worth it.

Third, by receiving Jesus in the Eucharist you are fed with His grace and love. So great is this grace that by your simple act of belief, all your venial sins are forgiven. These minor sins are forgiven so that you may be strengthened to resist them in the future. But it does take belief, so if we feel the same after receiving the Eucharist as before, it is not Christ who was absent for the encounter, and that leaves only us doesn't it?

But most importantly, know that there will be times when your faith is hot or cold, but you can always hold fast to the absolute truth as revealed by Christ and taught by the Catholic Church. As Catholics, we have the audacity to believe this because of what Jesus Christ said and did. He died for our sins and redeemed us back to the Father. He rose from the dead, and before He went back to Heaven, He instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. There He ordained the Apostles to "do this in memory of Me." Jesus prayed that we would all be one and He gave us this Church and made the Apostles our first bishops with Peter as the head. And for 2000 years, with unbroken succession, our bishops with Pope Benedict XVI as the head continue to lead us, along with all our priests and deacons with one goal in mind: the salvation of our souls.

And it is the salvation of our souls that is our ultimate summit. May God bless you all on your journey to the summit.