

Homily
Corpus Christi - Year C - June 23, 2019

Something very special is going to happen in a few moments. This event is so special that perhaps we don't realize how special it is. In just a few short minutes, when we receive the Eucharist, we say the word "Amen."

Those four letters spell out multiple sentences. Amen equals I believe that this is the same Christ who took flesh and was born in Bethlehem. That Amen cries out "I believe that this is the same Christ who restored health to the sick, hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, and even life to the dead." That Amen tells the world "I believe that this is the same Christ who suffered for me and died on the cross for me." That Amen announces: "I believe that this is the same Christ who rose from the dead on Easter, ascended to the Father and now reigns at the right hand of God."

All of that because of the simple word AMEN. Certainly, all of us can fall into a habit or routine of celebrating Eucharist and receiving Holy Communion. However, there is nothing ordinary about the Eucharist, nor is there anything ordinary about receiving Holy Communion. These are extreme actions in which we are intimately connected with our God, so connected that he has allowed us to receive his Body and Blood.

Strangely enough, our belief in the Eucharist draws many people to the Catholic faith. The fact that Jesus himself can be so present as he promised he would be helps people understand the fullness of this Jesus. Our belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is rooted in scripture, not something that the Church invented.

The scriptures are clear, especially in today's second reading, "This is my body....Do this in remembrance of me....This cup is my blood...Do this in remembrance of me." What an enormous privilege we have when we can share in this Eucharist. An interesting aspect about the Eucharist is that every celebration of the Eucharist is a community event even when the community is small. The actual reception of the Eucharist is done by each person, but in unity with others.

Our gospel, which speaks about the multiplication of the bread and fish, alludes to the Eucharist. In this gospel, Jesus tells his companions to feed the people themselves. I can imagine that the disciples were perplexed when Jesus said: "Give them some food yourselves." After all

there were thousands of people. Yes, God watches over us, but he expects us to use what we have to take care of ourselves. Yes, there was a true miracle in this situation, but the exhortation of Jesus was very clear.

Perhaps another way of looking at the juxtaposition of these two passages is that Jesus will feed us spiritually, but we need to take care of each other with our physical needs.

As we celebrate this feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, Corpus Christi, we need to remind ourselves of two awesome mysteries. First, Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. Our response to this presence must be the utmost of reverence and respect. Secondly, because we share in the life of Christ, who gave himself for others, so, too, we must give ourselves to one another in service. God feeds us so that we can feed one another. May our AMEN as we receive the Eucharist today be an AMEN as we reach out to others' needs in the world in which we live each day.