

Homily – 2nd Sunday Ordinary Time

This weekend in Middleton we are celebrating the first communion of one of our young parishioners. When we set the date for his first communion, the first thing I did when I got home was check to see what the scriptures would be for today. What did I find? In the gospel John the Baptist points to Jesus and says: “Behold, the Lamb of God.” These are part of the words we hear just before coming forward to receive the Eucharist. For the rest of us today is a time to remember our own experience of receiving the Eucharist for the first time and recall the many blessings we have received from this great sacrament since our special day.

Do you remember your first communion? Mine was on Easter Sunday over 50 years ago. There are no photos of the occasion. My main memory of the day is that we went to a restaurant for a meal. The reason this stays in my mind was that eating out was something reserved for special occasions. This was the beginning of a deeper relationship with the Lord that has sustained me throughout my life. I hope those of you who receive the Eucharist have experienced this gift the same way.

Over a hundred years ago, a little girl in northern France made her first communion. She had prepared for it; she had looked forward to it with excitement. And the day finally came. This is how she described the first time she received Jesus. “I felt that I was loved, and I said to Jesus, ‘I love you and I give myself to you forever...’ “It was a fusion: Jesus and I were no longer two, I had vanished in him as a drop of water vanishes in the ocean. Jesus alone remained.” She ended her description of her first communion by recalling the joy she felt that day – and the joy she experienced every time she received Christ in the Eucharist.

Today that little girl is one of the most famous saints in the Catholic Church – St. Therese of Lisieux. She illustrates that joy flows from the certainty of being infinitely loved by God. And every time we receive the Eucharist we receive a living reminder of God’s love for us. We too can say: “I know that I am loved. And that certainty brings a joy that nothing can take away, because I am safe in the hands of Jesus.” Knowing that we are deeply and profoundly loved by the Trinity and that Jesus gave his life for us is the most important grace of this great sacrament, which we Catholics call the “source and summit” of the faith.

How does Jesus come to our hearts? Jesus comes to our hearts in the form of consecrated bread and wine. This is because Jesus said that he would be there in the consecrated bread and wine. Nothing is impossible for God. So we believe that Jesus is really present in the consecrated host and wine.

Homily – 2nd Sunday Ordinary Time

Why does Jesus come to us as bread and wine, as food and drink? You know the reason. We cannot live many days without eating or drinking. It means food is essential for the life of our bodies. In the same way spiritual food is essential for the life of our souls. And the food for our souls is the body and blood of Jesus. That is why Jesus said that we would not have life in us if we don't eat his body and drink his blood. Hence you have to receive Jesus in the Holy Communion when you participate in Mass and you have to receive Jesus after asking his pardon and forgiveness for your sins, which we all do during the penitential rite, with great reverence and respect.

What will we do after receiving Jesus in Holy Communion? After communion we reflect on the gift we have just received. First, we have to invite Jesus into your heart. Then we have to thank Jesus for coming to your heart. Then we must remember that we are carrying Jesus to where we live our everyday lives, just as Jesus' mother Mary carried Jesus to her cousin Elizabeth.

Then the deacon dismisses people at the end of mass by telling them to "Go". Go is not a suggestion but an imperative. We are to bring the love that Jesus made known to us, personally and communally, through the Eucharist wherever we go.

There is much to reflect on how we can grow in the love of God and each other. I would like to conclude with a prayer that may be said privately after receiving communion.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me;
Body of Christ, save me;
Blood of Christ, inebriate me;
Water from the side of Christ, wash me;
Passion of Christ, strengthen me;
O good Jesus hear me;
Within your wounds hide me;
separated from you, let me never be;
From the evil one protect me;
At the hour of my death, call me;
And close to you bid me; That with your saints,
I may be praising you forever and ever.

Amen.