

This weekend, throughout the entire world, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ—a major feast day commonly known as the Feast of *Corpus Christi*. Today we have the great privilege and opportunity to turn our minds and hearts to one of the most sublime, comforting, mysteries of our faith: the real presence of Jesus—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity—in the Holy Eucharist. What do we mean by the “real presence” of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist? Pope Paul VI sums it up very well: We “must maintain, without ambiguity . . . the bread and the wine cease to exist after the consecration. From then on,

therefore, the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus, under the sacramental species of bread and wine, are truly presented before us for our adoration.” This is certainly a staggering truth of faith! But, why does our Lord come to us in such a unique and mysterious way?

The answer is found in today’s Gospel reading (Jn 6:51-58). Jesus says, “Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you.” So, Jesus comes to us in the Holy Eucharist in order to save us . . . to give us something we cannot give ourselves: a new kind of life, divine life, eternal life, a life of divine love. Pope John Paul II teaches us:



“The Eucharist signifies this charity [God’s love], and therefore recalls it, makes it present and at the same time brings it about. Every time that we consciously share in it, there opens in our souls a real dimension of that unfathomable love that includes everything that God has done and continues to do for us human beings, as Christ says: ‘My Father goes on working, and so do I.’ Together with this unfathomable and free gift, which is charity revealed in its fullest degree in the saving sacrifice of the Son of God, the sacrifice of which the Eucharist is the indelible sign, there also **springs up within us a lively response of love. We not only know love; we ourselves begin to love.** We enter, so to speak, upon the path of love and along this path make progress. Thanks to the Eucharist, the love that springs up within us from the Eucharist develops in us, becomes deeper and grows stronger.” *Dominicae Cenaе, #5.*

If, as the Holy Father says, the Eucharist communicates God’s unfathomable love to us, how is it that so many receive the Holy Eucharist yet remain apparently unchanged in their ability to love? Notice, John Paul II qualifies his statement on the effectiveness of receiving the Eucharist with a reference to the disposition of the recipient: “every time we **CONSCIOUSLY** share in it . . .” In other words, we must be conscious of the significance of Jesus’ presence in the Holy Eucharist — Jesus having emptied Himself and lovingly offered Himself as a living sacrifice for our sins, now humbly approaches us and asks for our response. Are we conscious of the fact that the Eucharist is the indelible sign of “charity revealed in its fullest degree”? Are we conscious of the fact that when we receive the Holy Eucharist we are welcoming our loving Savior? We are receiving God Himself? How would we respond if Jesus in His resurrected body literally appeared to us, walked up to us, looked us straight in the eyes and asked, “Do you believe in My love? Do you love me? Will you open your heart to me now so I might impart to you my life and my love?” How would we respond? This scenario is not so farfetched; in fact, the Feast of *Corpus Christi* reminds us that in the realm of faith it happens every time we present ourselves for Holy Communion. Happy Feast Day!!

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples