

Homily of Corpus Christi (The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ), Year A, 2026

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6:51-58

The Last Supper was the first Eucharistic celebration. Jesus took the bread, said the blessing (gave thanks), broke it, and gave it to his apostles and said “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.” And likewise, the cup and said “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.” Every Eucharistic celebration is a re-enactment of the first celebration. This is the reason priests repeat Jesus’ words in every Mass. St. Paul says in the second reading that our celebration is a participation in the Body and Blood of Christ. Jesus commands us to break the bread and share the cup in memory of his sacrifice for us. This is why the Mass is called Eucharistic Sacrifice. Every Eucharistic celebration is our obedience to this command. This command is Jesus’ last will. Just as we take people’s last will seriously, more so, we take Jesus’ last will very seriously.

Jesus did not say, “It is like my body.” Or, “It resembles my body.” Or, “It is in place of my body.” He said, “This is my body.” “This is my blood.” This is why we believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. This is why we adore the Eucharist in the Tabernacle and when it is exposed. Jesus is no longer physically with us; however, he is spiritually present with us in the Eucharist. He says, “I am with you always to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

In Latin, the priest ends the celebration by saying, “Ite missa est,” literally meaning, “Go, you are sent forth.” The Eucharistic Celebration is commonly called Mass. The word “Mass” is a coinage from “missa” in “Ite missa est.”

The word Eucharist is derived from the Greek word “eucharistein,” which means thanksgiving; referring to Jesus’ action at the Last Supper: he took the bread and the cup and gave thanks. Every Eucharistic celebration is a thanksgiving to God for the gift of Jesus Christ, for our salvation, for the eternal life we have received by his death and resurrection, for the continued spiritual presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, and the Eucharist being our spiritual food, which nourishes and empowers us for our earthly journey.

The Eucharistic celebration, which the Church calls Sacred Mysteries, is the highest prayer of the Catholic Church. The Vatican II Document states that the Eucharistic sacrifice is the source and summit of the Christian life (LG 11). In the celebration of the Eucharist are the interaction, activity, communion, and union of earth and heaven of which the high point is during the consecration of bread and wine which become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. All prayers of the Eucharistic celebration reveal the interaction, activity, communion, and union of earth and heaven. If we really ponder on the prayers and songs and actions and movements during the celebration, we will be overcome with awe and wonder.

Preparation of the Gifts: When the priest or the deacon mixes a drop of water into the chalice of wine, he prays quietly, “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”

From Offertory Prayer of Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, no. 3: “... grant that through this most holy exchange we may advance towards eternal redemption.”

From Eucharistic Prayer, no.1: “In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God: command that these gifts be borne by the hands of your holy Angel to your altar on high in the sight of your divine majesty, so that all

of us, who through this participation at the altar receive the most holy Body and Blood of your Son, may be filled with every grace and heavenly blessing.”

From Eucharistic Prayer no. 2: “You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Eucharist is the most distinctive mark of the Catholic Church and at the center of the Catholic faith. We must guard it with pride, respect, honor, and reverence. Someone advised priests and indeed all of us, “Take each Mass as your first Mass, your last Mass, and your only Mass.” This is to emphasize that every Mass requires our prayerful maximum attention and participation.

We are to receive the Eucharist worthily and must not disregard St. Paul’s advice in 1 Corinthians 11:28-29, “Let each one, then, examine himself before eating of the bread and drinking of the cup. Otherwise, he drinks his own condemnation in not recognizing the body.” This is why the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us to prepare for the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Jesus is the living bread who gives us spiritual nourishment now and grants us eternal life after our journey on earth. Because he lives, we also live (John 14:19). Whether we receive the Word or the Eucharist, we are bearers of Jesus Christ. This is a deep and profound responsibility. This is why St. Augustine cautions us, “Behold what you are, become what you receive.” By this statement, St. Augustine challenges us to align our daily thoughts, actions, and character in the imitation of Christ.

The salvation of those who do not believe in The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ is a mystery beyond our understanding and explanation. But for us believers, we pray that through the interaction, communion, and union with the heavenly powers in the Eucharistic celebration (most holy exchange), we may experience its transforming power and testify our own Eucharistic miracles. Amen and amen.

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