



MARY QUEEN OF PEACE PARISH

HOMILY OF DEACON TOM MULVIHILL

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

19 JUNE 2022 ✠ “THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL”

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This past week, my Grandson, Teddy, celebrated his Sixth Birthday.

I know what you're thinking.... “Deacon Tom: You couldn't POSSIBLY be old enough to have a six-year-old Grandson.” I know. Unbelievable... but true.

He celebrated it in the course of a Family vacation in Michigan, which meant that we had to cart all his gifts 419 miles –up and back. And because I had the biggest vehicle, and the fewest passengers, I was asked by my Daughter if I would take one of his gifts up. “Sure,” I said. Only... this gift wasn't a baseball bat or swim trunks or an iPad. It was... **A BOUNCE HOUSE**. Okay, it's a **small** bounce house, but even a **small** bounce house is not so small.

If I had misgivings about hauling it up, they evaporated when I saw the enjoyment of Teddy and his siblings... jumping, bouncing, flipping about in that brightly-colored contraption. Well worth the hassle. It was –it **IS**—a great gift, one that he likely will remember for the rest of his life, or at least as long as his parents can manage to locate the patch kit that came with it.

It got me to thinking about all the truly wonderful gifts that I have received throughout the course of my 60 years. My Pop gave me my Great Grandfather's watch fob. My wife gave me a beautiful print of sailboats as a wedding present. My Mom handed down to me various legacy items from my Family. My Grandfather gave me the original 1888 stock certificate from HIS Father's company. My kids have showered me with truly thoughtful and unexpected treasures. Our home is chuck-full of keepsake items lovingly gifted to me.

That said... today we celebrate a gift of immeasurable, incalculable worth. A gift from Jesus. We celebrate the **Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ**. We didn't earn it, we can't buy it, we don't deserve it. But he gave it to us anyway. At the Last Supper, and on that Cross of Calvary. It is the **PERFECT GIFT**, wrapped up in the **PERFECT PRAYER**, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

But, you may be wondering: Why do we need a special day set aside in the Church calendar for something **we already know about, we already believe in...** and **we can enjoy every day**?

Well, for starters, it seems that we as Catholics **DON'T** know and **DON'T** believe. A recent survey found that most Catholics **DO NOT** believe a core teaching of the Catholic Faith: that the bread and wine we receive in Holy Communion is the **REAL** Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. In fact, nearly **SEVEN** in **TEN** Catholics say they believe that during Mass the bread and wine used in Communion “are merely **SYMBOLS** of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.” And we all know about the plummeting Mass-attendance numbers.

If nothing else, we need this day on the calendar as a grand reminder of what **ACTUALLY** happens here at Mass. So, if you will please allow me, I'd like to offer a brief, five-point “refresher course” in The Eucharist this morning/evening. I'll start with the **BIGGIE**:

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**NUMBER ONE:
THE HOLY EUCHARIST IS THE REAL DEAL.**

There is a beautiful prayer that I pray with my Pop every morning when I bring him Holy Communion.

I firmly believe, O good Jesus, and with a lively faith I confess, that Thou, very God and Man, equal to the Father, art truly present in this Sacrament; for Thou, the very Truth, has said “This is my Body, this is my Blood.” I believe whatsoever the Son of God has said. O help my unbelief, increase my faith.

When He instituted the Eucharist at The Last Supper, Jesus did NOT say:

This is KINDA LIKE my Body. This is SORT OF LIKE my Blood.

He said:

This IS my Body. This IS my Blood.

Jesus is not a liar. In fact, He’s incapable of telling a lie. He meant what He said, He said what He meant. It’s His way of fulfilling His promise in his last moments here on earth to be with us “until the end of time.” It’s not a symbol, it’s not a facsimile, it’s not a representation, it’s not a prop in a play. It’s real. It’s Him, the very Author of Grace, offered up before us.



**NUMBER TWO:
THE EUCHARIST IS TRANSFORMATIVE.**

Simply put, it **CHANGES** us. It **IMPROVES** us. It makes us **BETTER PEOPLE**. As Catholics, we are beckoned to The Eucharist not because Jesus or His Church wants to shackle us with lots of obligations or rules, but because The Eucharist will **FREE** us. We don’t **HAVE TO** go to Mass...we **GET TO** go to Mass, to get better. When we make the commitment to never miss Sunday Mass, we will see our whole life change. We will go from being “Catholic-Affiliated” to having a robust Catholic identity. The Eucharist reorders our priorities such that we aren’t living according to what **WE** think best, but according to what **GOD** thinks best.



**NUMBER THREE:
DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT A REALLY SMART WAY TO LIVE.**

The fact is...people a lot smarter and a lot holier than you or I have been positively maniacal about The Blessed Sacrament.

**Saint Cyril of Jerusalem • Saint Margaret Mary • Saint Thomas Aquinas
Saint Francis Xavier • Saint John Francis Regis • Saint Basil The Great
Saint Alphonsus Liguori • Saint Teresa of Avila • Saint Francis of Assisi
Saint Therese of Lisieux • And tons of others**

Every Saint, every holy person, every individual who has ever wanted to get closer to Jesus has recognized that the quickest, most direct path to **GOD THE FATHER** is **THROUGH HIS SON**. There is no true sanctity, no true Sainly life without the Eucharist.



**NUMBER FOUR:
THE MASS AND THE EUCHARIST ARE BETTER THAN MOUNTAINS AND TREES.**

We’ve all heard the reasoning, and there is some truth to it. “I can feel much closer to God out in the great outdoors than I do at Mass.” Or, “I won’t say that I’m a particularly ‘religious person,’ but I am very ‘spiritual.’ But there are two things to

remember: First, these “moments of true, ‘natural’ grace” are rare and unpredictable. We can’t schedule them very easily. Second, awe at Christ’s real presence beats the awe of nature any day. But it takes time to train ourselves to appreciate it. We can train every Sunday.

NUMBER FIVE:

And this one is for all you Fathers out there on this Father’s Day...

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT IS THE MANLY-THING, THE FATHERLY-THING TO DO.

Let’s face it... In most Families, everyone is going in different directions throughout the week. Even families who want to eat together often find that they can’t, because of work, school, sports and activities. But Families who go to Sunday Mass, who are devoted to the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, will always remember this special time that they spend together, for a REAL purpose. (Conversely, as my Son-In-Law has wisely said, if you miss Mass THIS Sunday, it’s makes it all the easier to miss Mass NEXT Sunday.) Pope Benedict put it this way: “Fathers: PLEASE go with your children to Church and take part in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration! You will see that this is not time lost; rather, it is the very thing that can keep your family truly united and centered.” So, I say: Be a man. Be a Dad. Be the leading, most enthusiastic figure in your Home-Church. Make Mass and Eucharistic Adoration **YOUR** gift to your Children. You won’t regret it.

Teddy... A bounce house is really, really cool. But Jesus is cooler. His Body and Blood, His Soul and Divinity, offered here on this Altar every day...lasts longer, does more and changes not only you, but the people around you. I’m excited for that day, not too long from now, when you come forward and take Jesus in to your heart, and then make Him **YOUR** gift to others.

**O MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS.
O LIVING BREAD, MOST PURE FEAST, HIDDEN MANNA.
O FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY, BOND OF LOVE, REFRESHMENT OF HOLY SOULS.
O PLEDGE OF FUTURE GLORY, HIDDEN SAVIOR, GRAIN OF THE ELECT.
O MEMORIAL OF GOD’S WONDERS, GIFT OF DIVINE LOVE AND MOST AUGUST MYSTERY,
WE PLEDGE OUR DEVOTION TO THEE.**

**MAY THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, THE MOTHER OF GRACE
AND TABERNACLE TO THE LIVING BREAD
--SHE HERSELF NOURISHED BY THE WORD--
ENKINDLE OUR HEARTS WITH A RENEWED LOVE
AND DEVOTION TO HER SON’S GREATEST GIFT,
HIS OWN BODY AND BLOOD.**

AMEN.

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