

[Readings: Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Luke 9:11b-17]

Timothy P. O'Malley, from the University of Notre Dame, recently made reference to a cover story in *The Atlantic* magazine written by a journalist and former priest, James Carrol

I. Mr. Carroll announced that he refuses to participate in Mass. Because of the abuse scandal, he has determined that only a total boycott of the Eucharist makes sense. Until the Church has rid herself of the priesthood, he sees no way forward. The temptation of any faithful Mass-goer is simply to dismiss Carroll. Over the years, his columns in the Boston Globe have exhibited a skinny grasp of both theology and ecclesial history alike.

At the same time, the article reveals a pain that many Catholics have experienced. When we discover that our prelates and our priests have abused young children, seminarians and disabled men and women, what do we do? Do we simply participate in the life of the Church as normal? Is there a fear that our normal participation communicates to ecclesial leaders that we're not that upset?

Keep the ship on the same course, because we'll be there no matter what happens. The feast of Corpus Christi is a reminder that many of us have been there all along and will continue to stay, even when the clergy are corrupt. We don't show up to church for excellent preaching. We don't show up for clerical virtue. We show up to give worship to God and because only in this place can we receive the gift beyond all gifts and love beyond all loves: the very sacrifice of Christ that renews the face of the earth.

In 1 Corinthians Chapter 11, St. Paul describes the words that he has received, the foundational story that is at the heart of the Eucharist. Jesus gave His body as bread. He gave His blood as wine. Each time we eat this bread, each time we drink this cup, we meet our risen Lord.

These words of institution, proclaimed daily at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, are why many of us will continue to show up at Mass. The corruption of the Church is not novel. A volume of church history could be written describing the corruption that has dwelt in the Church in every century. And yet, by the Holy Spirit, we are still here! Alive and living, if not totally well.

Still, the Lord Who offered Himself in love upon the cross continues to make Himself available to men, women and young people. He makes Himself available to the Church in every age because Jesus Christ loved us. He loved us unto the end.

We show up to Mass week after week, even in the midst of scandal, because we come to meet the Risen Lord made available in the Eucharist. The feast of Corpus Christi must challenge each of us to conform ourselves more fully to this mystery.

In Thomas Aquinas's sequence for the feast, *Lauda Sion*, we sing, "Very bread, good shepherd, tend us Jesus, of Your love befriend us, You refresh us, You defend us, Your eternal goodness sends us in the land of life to see."

Jesus Christ entered into a world that loved darkness. And still, Jesus Christ comes to us in a Church that often loves the world of darkness too much.

The Eucharist is therefore not a way of upholding the status quo. It is instead a radical challenge to any member of the Church -- clergy or lay -- who has forgotten that the God we worship is not one of power or prestige but love unto the end. This God comes to us week after week. Day after day. This God feeds us with His true flesh and His true blood.

Rather than rid us of the priesthood, as Carroll suggests, it is better to hold up this mystery of the Eucharist as the very meaning of the priesthood, bishops, cardinals and the papacy.

Tim O'Malley's answer to Carroll is that we need better priests. We need better Christians. Most importantly, we need the Eucharist.

Joseph Pronechen, a staff writer of the National Catholic Register, writes about the importance of the Eucharist through a history of miraculous events.

During the middle of the eighth century, a Basilian monk who was more oriented toward science than faith had persistent doubts about the reality of the bread and wine becoming Christ's true Body and true Blood at the consecration — until one particular Mass. As he pronounced the words of consecration, "suddenly the monk saw bread turn into Flesh and the wine into Blood," according to documents at the Sanctuary of the Eucharistic Miracle in Lanciano, Italy.

This was heaven's direct answer to the monk — belief quickly replaced his doubts as he invited those at Mass to come and contemplate the living God before their

eyes. The faithful can still do so in the Church of San Francesco in Lanciano over a dozen centuries later, as the preserved flesh and coagulated blood remain on display. TheRealPresence.org reports that tests found the flesh is indeed real human flesh. The blood is human blood, too, type AB, the same blood type found on the Shroud of Turin.

Furthermore, in 1973, the World Health Organization's board of governors chose a scientific commission to check the initial findings. After 500 examinations, they verified the 1971 findings, and "declared without doubt that it is a living tissue," reports the Lanciano shrine — and scientifically unexplainable.

The feast of Corpus Christi, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, has been celebrated since the mid-13th century and is unsurprisingly tied to a Eucharistic miracle. St. Juliana of Liege was told by Our Lord about the Eucharistic feast, and she asked Pope Urban IV to institute it for the universal Church.

Lanciano might be the most famous of all Eucharistic miracles, but there have been many over the centuries, including recent ones.

On Christmas Day 2013, a Eucharistic miracle took place in St. Hyacinth's Church in [Legnica, Poland](#), about 200 miles from Krakow. During Communion time, a Host accidentally fell to the floor. The priest at once placed it in a small container with water to dissolve the host and put it in the special sink to return it to the earth. But two weeks later, as the "Acutis Miracle" site explains, Father Andrzej Ziombra, accompanied by another priest, "noticed that the Host had not dissolved and that a red spot covering a fifth of its surface appeared," Father Ziombra reported.

"We decided to inform the bishop, who established a special theological scientific commission to analyze the event."

When two major forensic medicine institutes were asked to examine samples from the Host, both found it was composed of myocardial (heart) tissue. Even more, the second source at the Pomeranian Medical University's department further found it to be "human heart muscle with alterations that often appear during agony."

When we receive the Body of Christ, we receive a piece of His Sacred Heart when He suffered His agony on the cross! Once the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was given the results, it recognized this as a supernatural experience.

“Eucharistic miracles give us a reinforcement that the Eucharistic is a Person and that Person is coming through in the miracles,” explained Father Carlos Martins of the Companions of the Cross and director of the Treasures of the Church ministry. “It makes the Eucharist more ... the miracle affords that encounter with Christ be seen anew by people.”

At the parish of St. Mary in Buenos Aires, a Eucharistic miracle happened not once, but three times — in 1992, 1994, and on the Feast of the Assumption, Aug. 15, 1996, when a Host fell to the floor during Communion and then was placed in a container to dissolve. By Aug. 26, the Host had transformed into blood.

At the time the archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Jorge Maria Bergoglio, later our current Pope Francis, asked Professor Ricardo Castañon Gomez to examine and evaluate what had occurred. “The Eucharistic Miracles of the World” tour highlights the words of Castañon Gomez. Among his many findings: In 2000 a renowned expert on tissues found the samples to have human skin and white blood cells. In 2003 the same expert said the tissue was that of an inflamed heart, meaning “that the person to whom they belonged must have suffered a lot.”

In 2005, Castañon Gomez asked another top expert at Columbia University to investigate. That scientist pinpointed the tissue as from the heart, particularly the left ventricle, and labeled it still-living tissue that was from a suffering person.

Castañon Gomez concluded that the Lord “in the miracle wanted to show us his myocardium, which is the muscle that gives life to the whole heart, just as the Eucharist does with the Church. And why the left ventricle? Because from it comes the purified blood and Jesus is the one who purifies his Church from her sins.”

Through Eucharistic miracles, Jesus surely does strength our faith. AMEN!