

Homily St Pius & St Anthony Corpus Christi Sunday Year B

For this Feast of Corpus Christi, I want to tie together a couple of sayings that we all use at some time or other about food and spending time with others. Also, just to show us how important food is to special times together, (holidays) and that the best experiences making memories revolve around food, notice how every big holiday has its own food: Thanksgiving turkey, Easter Ham (or up east - lamb), Christmas-any kind of homemade candy, Memorial Day BBQ, 4th July burgers & dogs, any summer picnic means fried chicken (or I have to add that any day is holiday when we throw in ice cream). So, the food sayings that I'm thinking of that give us a deeper appreciation of Corpus Christi are: 1) *'You gotta eat'* and 2) *'She got to him through his stomach'*

First, *'You gotta eat'*. People sometimes say this about trying to find a time to schedule a meeting-like when they say, "We'll grab lunch over the meeting" or "Let me pick it up and I'll see you at the worksite at 12:00-You gotta eat!" And the other saying is maybe about a couple dating each other: *"Oh, she got to him through his stomach"* Maybe it was about a couple that met and married later after that first special date when she may have fixed her family recipe of homemade from scratch lasagna (not just homemade sauce but even pasta from scratch!)

I think these sayings deepen our appreciation of how wise Christ's design is to have His people 1) remain in His love, 2) be united to one another and 3) always know Him through the institution of a sacred meal. Christ's memorial presence under the form of food shared. Jesus is with us, because He gets to us through our stomach and of course, God does know, we gotta eat.

I think it all starts by us asking "Why do we even do this sacrament week after week, but because Jesus told us to? ('Do this in memory of me', He said). The Holy Eucharist is Jesus' way of fulfilling His word, spoken from the Last Supper, **"I will not leave you orphans"** (Jn 14:18) & just before His ascension in glory (Matthew 28:20) **"I am with you always.."** So Jesus remains with us disciples forever by entering into us through a shared meal, a sacred food of a loaf blessed and broken, and a cup handed & shared, just as He did and taught us to.

What do we call this sacrament?

The Catholic Catechism gives these multiple names to this sacrament—can I say, a smorgasbord of names, or menu of titles. A few of them are: The Lord's Supper, Commemoration of Last Supper, The Breaking of Bread, Memorial of the Lord's Passion/Resurrection, Sacrifice of Thanksgiving Sacrifice of Praise, Divine Liturgy-

Paschal Banquet, Blessed Sacrament, Holy Communion, Holy Mass, Communion of Saints-Heavenly Bread of Angels or Jesus' real, true and substantial presence, in Word and Deed (Catechism paragraphs 1322-1419)

Any one of these titles we could spend a whole homily on, but I wanted to focus on the last. Jesus, truly, really & substantially present to us in the sacrament of bread become His Body and wine become His Blood..... His Real Presence. These elements are Jesus saying 'I am with you'.

It strikes me so deeply, that the Holy Eucharist is Jesus' way- His means of staying with His people. Like He is telling us, "I will be within you because I become your food and this food of my life incorporates me within you. Similar to how our bodies digest and draw out the minerals/nutrients from food to create our tissue and muscle, so also Jesus nourishes us with His life-grace from within. Giving us the sacrament of Holy Eucharist demonstrates Jesus' faithfulness to us- "I am with you always". But we might still ask, "How does this all happen?" Well, let's start with when He gave this sacrament to us. He instituted-originated-inaugurated this sacrament on the night before He died for us. He is tying together Himself both actions -His feeding of us with His Life at Last Supper, and His giving up His Life by death on the cross so that we might live-be saved. The Wisdom of God is reflected in Jesus making a sacred meal of feeding others with one's own life the representation of His Eternal Sacrificial Act of self-giving on the cross- that we be forgiven and saved-the cross. As if Jesus said, 'You've got to eat, so let me put myself into such an important daily ritual as sitting down to eat. I myself will nourish and feed you that you will know me, and remember me every time you pick up a morsel to eat". What a connection- the cross is embodied in a holy meal. That is sacrificial giving. It would be a big enough gift, if you gave another person your food ahead of yourself, but how much more if you give another person your own life.

There is a great scene in the movie 'Nativity' I want to share: especially in this year dedicated to St Joseph. It is a scene about sacrificial love regarding food. The movie 'Nativity' came out the year after Mel Gibson's so popular Passion of Christ that focused on Jesus death, so I guess a director thought "Let's also focus on how Jesus entered this world of ours". So a movie came out dramatizing Jesus' birth, too. There is a great scene in it when Mary and Joseph are struggling to make the trip to Bethlehem for the census, and their resources

are running thin. Joseph works hard to secure water and food for Mary (who is eating for two!), and before they get to Bethlehem, he realizes that their bread store is not going to make it-they are down to one loaf. Mary (she doesn't know exactly how little bread they have), she expresses concern and Joseph says, 'Oh there is enough-we'll split it and share' and He tears it in half, giving her half and then when she begins to eat, **he turns and places whole rest of that half back into the satchel. He eats nothing and gives Mary all that is available for that one meal (each time).** So Joseph fed her how many times as he fasted himself and gave her the remaining portions-cutting himself out! Now that is sacrificial giving-feeding. Yet, notice Jesus taking it to a whole new level of sacrifice,because it is one thing to give away your food for another to eat, but what if you give away your own life for them to consume, Give away not just my food but my life to them. And that is what Jesus does in this Holy Eucharist. He had hinted about this sacrifice before when he said earlier, "I will lay down my life for my sheep"(Jn 10:11, 15) and that 'the greatest love is to lay down one's life for one's friend ' (Jn 15:13). And in the Holy Eucharist that we are blessed to receive each week, each day possibly, Jesus keeps us fed in our souls, and keeps us alive and always close to Himself, our Shepherd. He is our food, our life!