

Celebrating the Source and Summit

Years ago, before I had entered the seminary, I was employed as a graphic artist at a publishing company. Most people at work knew that I was active in my parish and was sincere about my faith. One guy who worked in the warehouse belonged to a church he described as a non-denominational Bible-believing community. He would periodically challenge me about Catholic beliefs and practices, and was usually surprised to learn that there were real answers and solid explanations for things he misunderstood about Catholicism. He said to me one day, "The real reason I'm not Catholic is that you guys teach all sorts of things that aren't in the Bible."

"Really? Like what?" I asked. "Can you give me an example?"

"Well, take the Eucharist for starters." I was taken aback. My co-worker's response was the last thing I was expecting.

There are a bunch of times in the Bible when the Eucharist is mentioned. The Last Supper, of course, contains the Institution Narrative when Christ celebrates the First Mass, where He says the bread and wine are His Body and Blood. Chapter 6 in the Gospel of John contains the Bread of Life Discourse in which Jesus gives us the theological teaching with which we understand the Last Supper/First Mass. The Second Mass occurs Easter Sunday night at Emmaus when the Risen Lord was made known to two disciples "in the Breaking of the Bread" (Luke 24:13-35, which is depicted on our altar's mosaic, very appropriately!). In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he explains the tradition of the Church handing on the celebration of the Eucharist (1Cor 11:23-26). The Letter to the Hebrews describes Jesus as the Great High Priest, and the Book of Revelations offers a glimpse into the Heavenly Liturgy, which the earthly liturgy (the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass) already participates in, uniting ourselves to Christ. These are a but a few examples, there are more. The Old Testament, too, contains many more references which point to the Eucharist, the most obvious being the story of the Passover).

Many saints, theologians, popes and preachers have expounded on the depth, beauty, reality and ultimate meaning that the Body and Blood of Christ has for us, especially as it is the heavenly and liturgical meal in



which we are invited to share, and in which we are called to find hope, healing, new life and joy.

For all these reasons – and more – the Catholic Church teaches that the Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. Receiving the Eucharistic Heart of our Lord in the *appearance* of bread and wine is the source of our strength, faith and grace we need to live as disciples in the world. But it is also the goal and

pinnacle of discipleship: being united with Jesus, the author of life and artist of love. The Eucharist "is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ, and of the worship humanity offers to Christ, and through Him to the Father in the Holy Spirit" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1325).

Today, in the great feast of Corpus Christi (which are simply the Latin words for Body of Christ), we take time to contemplate and appreciate the most sublime of truths. Doing so helps us to grow in love – and gratitude – first, simply for who Christ is; and second, for what He has done for us. And that inspires and motivates us to worship Him.

Worship can be understood as simply a verbal, musical or ritual expression of our gratitude and love. And on Corpus Christi, the Catholic Church does that with added prayers, song, and even a procession, a procession which envelops our campus, a 'sacramental' sign of how we desire Christ's sanctifying love to envelope our hearts, lives, parish and world. There is a pattern, a relationship, that what is done on earth will be fulfilled in Heaven, and what is in Heaven will be imitated on earth – *on earth as it is in Heaven*, as the Lord taught us to pray in the Our Father.

And so I invite you to join in this Corpus Christi procession today, which will flow outwards after the 11 AM Mass, travel around the block with song, prayer and Scripture, and then return into the church for solemn Benediction. If we dream of a world that is more conformed to goodness, truth, and beauty, a Eucharistic Procession is the perfect way to begin that transformation.

Additionally, as we celebrate a year of Eucharistic Renewal in the United States, all are invited to a similar Mass and Procession on Friday evening, June 28th as our parish becomes a host site for young adults in the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage.