

*The Parishes of*

**Saint Mary in Bremen &**

**Saint Bernadette in Lancaster**



**The Defenders of the Eucharist**

**The Feast of Corpus Christi**

**The Body and Blood of Christ**

June 3, 2018

# St Bernadette Parish

1343 Wheeling Road NE. (740) 654 • 1893  
LANCASTER, OH 43130-8701

# St Mary Parish

602 Marietta Street (740) 569 • 7738  
BREMEN, OH 43107

## cover picture: **The Defenders of the Eucharist**

The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovers protectively over the saints in the center of the composition emitting golden light. The seven saints are all defenders of the doctrine of Transubstantiation (the doctrine that Jesus is substantially present in the Eucharistic bread and wine). The seven are:

1. St Ambrose, theologian and bishop, who helped crush the Arian doctrine that reduced the meaning of Christ and thus of his Eucharist
2. St Gregory the Great, the pope whose reform of the liturgy stressed the centrality of the Eucharist
3. St Augustine, the early Church's most celebrated and influential theologian
4. St Clare of Assisi, the first Franciscan woman, who repulsed the Muslim invaders at Assisi by displaying to them the Host; she is shown holding a monstrance and gazing at the viewer
5. St Thomas Aquinas, the medieval Dominican theologian who helped clarify the Church's doctrine; he holds a large book under his arm and wears a gold chain from which is hung a blazing sun
6. St Norbert, the German monk, missionary, and bishop, who preached against those who would who demote the Christian sacraments
7. St Jerome, the Roman priest and later monk, whose translation work made the word of God about the sacraments available to the people of the Western church. He lived very austere, but is always shown dressed in the red of a cardinal and often with his head buried in a book.

In the center, at the bottom of the composition, below the apron of the "stage" is a burning lamp (the lamp of truth), books, and ink pots and quill pens, all instruments of the writings of the Church's teachers.

Painted (1625) in oil on canvas (14.2 x 14.5 ft) by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)  
now in the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL

## our parishes

<b>both parishes</b>	<b>Fr Thomas Kessler</b>	<i>pastor</i>	(614) 634 • 0499	<i>wnthomaskessler</i>	@ icloud . com
	<b>Stephen Karnes</b>	<i>business manager</i>	(740) 654 • 1893	<i>stbernbook</i>	@ gmail . com
	<b>Kathy Kehnast</b>	<i>pastoral coordinator</i>	(740) 654 • 1893	<i>stbermparish</i>	@ yahoo . com
	<b>Julie &amp; Chase Stafford</b>	<i>youth ministry</i>	(740) 808 • 7294	<i>maristellaspirt</i>	@ gmail . com
<b>Bremen St Mary Parish</b>	<b>Ben Factor</b>	<i>liturgical music</i>		<i>b_factor</i>	@ lancaster . k12.oh.us
	<b>Sarah Borah</b>	<i>religious education</i>		<i>sborah920</i>	@ gmail . com
<b>The parish office</b> is at the church vestibule.		Hours: 9-11 AM, Tuesdays. 602 Marietta St, Bremen, OH 43107		(740) 569 • 7738	
<b>St Bernadette Parish</b>	<b>Jeff Carpenter</b>	<i>deacon</i>	(740) 681 • 9918	<i>carpenter.277</i>	@ osu . edu
	<b>Mark Scarpitti</b>	<i>deacon</i>	(740) 438 • 3970	<i>dcn.mark</i>	@ frontier . com
	<b>Ann Essman</b>	<i>pastoral minister</i>	(740) 653 • 9347	<i>aessman001</i>	@ att . net
	<b>Steve Huber</b>	<i>facilities coordinator</i>	(740) 654 • 3137	<i>shuber57</i>	@ yahoo . com
	<b>Angie &amp; Kent Kerns</b>	<i>religious education</i>	(740) 654 • 2588	<i>kwkerns</i>	@ gmail . com
	<b>Liz Latorre</b>	<i>liturgical music</i>	(740) 243 • 1872	<i>lizlatorre</i>	@ gmail . com
<b>The St Bernadette Parish office</b> is in the Mary Good Center, across the back parking lot from the school.		Hours: 9 AM-1 PM, MWThF; 11 AM-1 PM, Tu. 1343 Wheeling Rd NE, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701 (740) 654 • 1893			
<b>Saint Bernadette School</b>	<b>Pam Eltringham</b>	<i>principal</i>	(740) 654 • 3137	<i>peltring</i>	@ cducation . org
	<b>Barb Huber</b>	<i>secretary</i>	(740) 654 • 3137	<i>bhuber</i>	@ cducation . org
<b>Saint Bernadette School</b> is located at 1325 Wheeling Rd, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701					

## sacramental life

**Where** First reception of Eucharist and of Penance as well as reception of Baptism, Confirmation, and Matrimony may only be **in one's own parish church**, unless with good reason the pastor deems it **necessary** to do otherwise.

**Baptism** To have a child baptized, parents must register and attend a class as a couple (unless attendance just isn't possible, in which case some discussion with Kathy Kehnast will be necessary). Sessions are held quarterly for both parishes. Try to attend before the child is born. Please don't ask if you "have to go." This is an opportunity to meet with parents of children about the same age as your little one; those parents are in the same wonderful boat as you are. At least one parent and both godparents need to be practicing Catholics. If you don't **attend Sunday Mass regularly (a basic part of being a practicing Catholic!)**, there is something you can do: Start coming to Sunday Mass.

**Penance** The priest is available for Penance

- at St Bernadette Saturdays at 3 PM and Thursdays at 5:30 PM, and
- at St Mary in Bremen on Sunday at 8 AM.

Every Catholic priest is **available whenever there is a need**. There are Penance opportunities for St Bernadette School children four times in the year so that they will learn the beauty of frequent confession. The Church's law requires us to receive the sacrament of Penance at least once a year.

**Anointing and Care of the Sick** The priest gives the Anointing of the Sick to one who is dangerously ill, facing major surgery, or suffering from the ravages of old age.

- We celebrate the sacrament communally at a Sunday Mass before Advent and during the Easter season so that we can all pray with you for **"health of mind and body."**
- The priest brings Penance, Anointing, and Holy Communion to the sick or shut in. Call the parish office to let us know before a hospitalization or when it has been too long since the sacraments were last available.

**Holy Matrimony** Couples wishing to marry should contact the parish office six months before a wedding. Why so long? Because **this sacrament, not just the ceremony, requires serious preparation**. And the Church needs to be involved in that preparation. Catholics who marry outside the Church have left the sacramental life and need to change that situation before receiving the other sacraments. The Church needs to **support couples through the years of married life**. That's why our diocese offers programs to enhance married life. To learn about these programs, watch the weekly bulletin.



## At Prayer with the Church

### How the Church Prays at Mass Today

O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament have left us a memorial of your Passion, grant us, we pray, so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood that we may always experience in ourselves the fruits of your redemption. Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

### The Best of Intentions ... at Mass

<b>June 4, Monday</b>	8:20 AM	St Bernadette	deceased members of the Sevigny family
<b>June 5, Tuesday</b>	8:20 AM	Bremen St Mary	Marie Young
<b>June 6, Wednesday</b>	8:20 AM	St Bernadette	Tommy Hartung
<b>June 7, Thursday</b>	6 PM	St Bernadette	Mildred Mathias
<b>June 8, Friday</b>	8:20 AM	St Bernadette	Donna Abbott

### Hear God's Word

<b>June 3 Corpus Christi</b>	<b>Exodus 24:3-8</b>	<b>Ps 116</b>	<b>Mark 14:12-26</b>
<b>June 4, Monday</b>	2 Peter 1:2-7	Ps 91	Mark 12:1-12
<b>June 5, Tuesday</b> <i>St Boniface</i>	2 Peter 3:12-18	Ps 90	Mark 12:13-17
<b>June 6, Wednesday</b> <i>St Norbert</i>	2 Timothy 1:1-12	Ps 123	Mark 12:18-27
<b>June 7, Thursday</b>	2 Timothy 2:8-15	Ps 25	Mark 12:28-34
<b>June 8, Friday</b> <i>Sacred Heart of Jesus</i>	Hosea 11:1-9 Ephesians 3:8-19	Is 12	John 19:31-37
<b>June 9, Saturday</b> <i>Immaculate Heart of Mary</i>	2 Timothy 4:1-8	Ps 71	Luke 2:41-51
<b>June 10 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday</b>	<b>Genesis 3:9-15</b> <b>2 Cor 4:13-5:1</b>	<b>Ps 130</b>	<b>Mark 3:20-35</b>

### Pope Francis Asks Us to Pray in June

that social networks may work towards that inclusiveness which respects others for their differences.

### 'Tis the Season

Make today **the first day of the new season of Christian Initiation**. The RCIA (Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults) marks by ritual several of the steps on the way to entry into the Church. I would like to declare today the day

we begin praying, thinking about, and talking to next year's Easter entrants into the Catholic Church. It is time to begin the coming year's project of Evangelization! Last Sunday we celebrated God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who empowered the Church to go out to all the world and tell the Good News. Now is the season for prayer, thought, and talking with/to/about our friends and neighbors, getting them ready for the RCIA class that will begin in late Summer!

Too shy for that kind of thing? Get over it! You are a Christian, aren't you? This is what Christians do. They tell the Good News. They do it respectfully, gently, and as intelligently as they can. But they do it! If you care about a person, you care about her or his eternal salvation. God can save people outside of membership in our Church. But the Church, since she provides her members with the sacraments, is the way the Lord Jesus has given to us as the ordinary means for us to receive that salvation. To neglect to share that gift is to neglect something your friend or neighbor or spouse may need. Start today.

### Prayer for Memorial Day

God of power and mercy,  
you destroy war and put down earthly pride.  
Banish violence from our midst  
and wipe away our tears,  
that we may all deserve to be called  
your sons and daughters.  
Keep in your mercy those men and women  
who have died in the cause of freedom  
and bring them safely  
into your kingdom of justice and peace.  
We ask this though Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen

—from *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*

## Both Parishes

### Baby Bottles

Remember the PDHC's **Baby Bottle Campaign** by collecting your loose change **from Mother's Day to Father's Day**, June 17, to help local parents and would-be parents in need. Spare change from baby bottles goes a long way to continue offering free pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, material assistance and life-affirming programs to strengthen families. Grab a bottle and bring it back on Father's Day. Let us give thanks to our father and mother for choosing life and help a local family do the same.

### Catholic Home Missions

This Sunday, we collect for the Catholic Home Missions Appeal. More than 40 percent of dioceses in the United States are considered home mission territory because they are **unable to fund the essential pastoral work needed in their communities**. Your support of this appeal helps ease

the struggle of these dioceses. Please prayerfully consider how you can support this appeal. Information can be found at [www.usccb.org/home-missions](http://www.usccb.org/home-missions).

## Retirement Reception

Mark your calendars for a retirement reception for Father Kessler. It will be hosted by both parishes on Sunday, June 24, from 12:30 until 2 PM in the St Bernadette parish hall. All are invited. Details will follow soon.

By the way, after July 10, Father Kessler will live and help out at St Catharine Parish in Columbus.

His address will be

**500 South Gould Road, Columbus, OH 43209**

His email will continue to be:

***wmthomaskessler @ icloud.com.***

His cell phone will also continue to be:

**(614) 634-0499.**

As we go to press early (because of the Memorial Day weekend) the next pastor has not yet been named, but we are told he will be soon.

## Bremen St Mary Parish

### Summer Square Dances

Summer means square dancing at Schmelzer's Grove. Mark your calendars on the Sunday evenings of June 10, July 15, and Aug 12 from 7-9:30 PM. Admission is \$4 per person.

### Ministry at Mass at St Mary

+	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Communion	gifts	sacristan / usher
Corpus Christi June 3 at 8:30	Linda Qualls	Caden & Cody Fyffe	Neil Boch, Tyna Schmelzer-Fox, Angi Skinner	Nick Schmelzer family	Angi Skinner
10 <sup>th</sup> Sunday June 10 at 8:30	Jeanne Schmelzer	Charles Schoenlaub, Isaac Schmelzer	Wyatt Borah, Leo Kunkler Sr, Jim Schmelzer	Maurice Schmelzer family	Jim Schmelzer

### Vacation Church School

St Mary Parish will host children from parishes all over our area for a week of fun, learning, and prayer at a very special Vacation Church School again this summer, on the evenings of June 18-22, at **Schmelzer's Grove**. Anyone (from either parish!) interested in helping should contact Sarah Borah at (740) 569-7738.



### What Holiness Is

“Holiness is something greater than a moral quality. It is the presence of God with men, of men with God; it is God’s tent pitched amongst men in our midst. The Church exists to become God’s dwelling place in the world, to become holiness.”

—Pope Benedict XVI

## St Bernadette Parish

### Ministry at Mass at St Bernadette

+	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion
Saturday, June 2 at 4 PM Corpus Christi Vigil Mass	Sandy Landefeld	Kendall Cox, Abby & Mary Frazier	Terry Carpenter Lee Guinan Brad Rider Craig Shaw Mickey Steyaert Kathy Wagner
Sunday June 3 at 11 AM Corpus Christi	John Hartig	Anna Hartig, Brooke & Bryson Vogel	Larry Sanford Teresa Scarpitti Anna Sevigny David Shonk Becky Wickham Amy Woo
Monday, 8:20 AM	Mary Jane Vajen	Addy Myers Olivia Reynolds	Pat Dreyer Kathy Kehnast
Wednesday, 8:20 AM	Bob Christy	Diana & Sarah Woo	Angie Christy Mary Jane Vajen
Thursday, 6 PM	Kathy Kehnast	Tori Fitzgibbon Becca Fuller	Lee Guinan Paul Lonergan
Friday, 8:20 PM	Jim Merk	Emma McCrady Brennan Quaintance	Rita Merk Mary Jane Vajen
Saturday, June 9 at 4 PM 10 <sup>th</sup> Sunday Vigil Mass	Terry Carpenter	Clara & Susan Craaybeek, Becca Fuller	Tara Craaybeek Bob & Angie Christy Susan Garrett Jim & Becky Kuhn
Sunday June 10 at 11 AM 10 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Dennis Forquer	Collin & Emma McCrady, Caroline Messerly	Pat Dreyer Pat Gins John & Teresa Hartig Rita Merk Ben Peters

## Around Central Ohio

### Springs Celebrates 150 Years

This year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of **St Mary of the Springs Academy**. A committee of Academy graduates is searching for memorabilia, including photos, yearbooks, and diplomas, for a permanent display at The Jubilee Museum in Columbus. St Mary Academy was a school for girls founded by the Dominican Sisters in 1830 in Somerset in response to the educational needs of frontier Catholics. When a fire destroyed the buildings, the Sisters rebuilt in Columbus in 1868. To reflect the natural springs on the property, “of the Springs” was added to the name. The Academy closed in 1966. For information or donations, contact (614) 237-1379.

## Heroes of the Catholic Reformation

St Mary Parish in Lancaster offers a course this summer titled “True Reformers—Saints of the Catholic Reformation.” In this 6-part DVD series from the Augustine Institute, Dr Christopher Blum explores the lives of six saints who spearheaded the Church’s renewal after the turbulence and confusion caused by the Protestant Reformation. You will discover that their call to return to the adventure of following Christ is just as compelling today as it was 500 years ago. Deepen your understanding of the Church’s response to the Protestant Reformation through her saints. The series happens on Monday evenings from 7 to 8:30 PM from June 18 through July 30, and on Wednesday mornings from 8 to 9:30 AM from June 27 through August 15, in the Spirit Center. Workbook cost is \$17; registration closes June 5. For information, contact Brian McCauley at (740) 653-5054.

## Jubilee of Marriages

Bishop Campbell is inviting couples **married at least 25 years and celebrating an anniversary divisible by 5 ... and, in fact, any couple married more than 60-years** is invited to the Jubilee of Anniversaries to be held at 2:30 PM on Sunday, June 24, at St Andrew Church in Upper Arlington. The occasion will begin with Mass followed by a reception. Registration forms are available through the parish or register online at [columbuscatholic.org/marriage-ministry-1](http://columbuscatholic.org/marriage-ministry-1) or by calling the Marriage & Family Life Office at (614) 241-2560 x 5. RSVP by Wednesday, June 13. Names of couples registering before June 13 will be featured in the event program and *The Catholic Times*. Other couples will receive their certificate in the mail after the event.

## Pray for Religious Freedom

As part of the national Religious Freedom Week, a Mass and Holy Hour for Religious Freedom will be celebrated Wednesday, June 27, at 5:15 PM, at Saint Joseph Cathedral. Holy Hour will include the rosary, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and Benediction. All are welcome. For information, contact Social Concerns at (614) 241-2540 or [orsocmailbox@columbuscatholic.org](mailto:orsocmailbox@columbuscatholic.org). Elevator access to the Cathedral is available from the west entrance (in the courtyard) from E Broad St. For information about religious freedom issues, visit [www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty).

## Diocesan Senior Citizens Celebration

Bishop Campbell **will honor senior citizens** on Tuesday, June 19, at 10:30 AM at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Grove City. He will celebrate Mass. A luncheon will follow. To register, send a check for \$15 by June 14 to the Office for Social Concerns, Diocese of Columbus, 197 E Gay Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215. For information, call (614) 241-2540 or email [socmailbox@columbuscatholic.org](mailto:socmailbox@columbuscatholic.org).

## Pilgrimage to Alabama

St Gabriel Radio's **pilgrimage to EWTN and the Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament** in Alabama is filling up. Bus

transportation, lodging, tours, and meals are all included. The bus leaves from 4747 Sawmill Road on Wednesday, June 27, at 7 AM and returns on Saturday, June 30, at 6 PM. For information or to register, go to the radio website or contact [colleenl@stgabrielradio.com](mailto:colleenl@stgabrielradio.com) or (614) 459-4820.

## Josephinum 4-Mile Run

The Friends of the Josephinum invite adults and children of all ages for a 4-mile run/walk at Glacier Ridge Metro Park, Dublin, from 9 to 11 AM on Sept 15. This professionally-run event is open to the public, with free parking available. Participants will receive great takeaways, including wine or jam and bread. Register now to receive a family discount or early registration rate for **the first Catholic-sponsored event of this kind** in the area. Register at [m3ssports.com](http://m3ssports.com) by clicking “coming events” then “Josephinum 4-Miler”. Walk or run at your own pace and enjoy a September morn in the park. **Proceeds benefit seminarians of the Pontifical College Josephinum** in Worthington. Sponsorships are available; call Joe Kohler at (614) 436-2441.

## Irish Alumni Golf

**Alumni of St. Mary, Bishop Fenwick and Fisher Catholic High Schools** will play at Pleasant Valley Golf Course on Saturday, June 9, at 9 AM at \$150 per team. For information and to check availability contact Molly Neighbor at (740) 654-1231 or [mneighbor@cducation.org](mailto:mneighbor@cducation.org).

Weekly Confessions & Masses							
But these times sometimes change, so call ahead!							
parish	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Penance
<i>Bremen St Mary</i>		8:20 AM					8 AM Sun
<i>Lancaster St Bernadette</i>	8:20 AM		8:20 AM	6 PM	8:20 AM	9 AM 1 <sup>st</sup> Sat	5:30 PM Thu, 3 PM Sat, 8:30 AM on 1 <sup>st</sup> Sat
<i>Lancaster St Mary</i>	7 AM	9 AM	7 AM	9 AM			4 PM Sat
<i>Lancaster St Mark</i>	8 AM	8 AM	6 PM	8 AM	8 AM		5:30 PM Sat
<i>Sugar Grove St Joseph</i>	VARIES	12PM	8 AM	12PM	12PM		½ hour before Mass
<i>Circleville St Joseph</i>	9 AM	7 AM	9 AM		9 AM		4 PM Sat
<i>Logan St John</i>	8 AM	8 AM	9 AM		8 AM	9 AM	4 PM Sat

## Giving Birth and Giving Life

**Angels Nurture and Disciple, AND** is a new pro-life ministry that aims to inspire, empower, and facilitate significant improvement in the educational, career, financial, and spiritual well-being of single mothers who have chosen life for their unborn child. **AND's** pro-grams extend to women who desire and seek change but don't have the support available to them to make transcendent change a reality. Each woman who seeks to enroll in **AND** is matched with a mentor who walks with her for two years,

providing positive role modeling as a woman, mother, and child of God. **AND** is in significant need of volunteers and supporters. To support or volunteer, visit [www.angelsand.org](http://www.angelsand.org) or call Tim Welsh at (614) 419-6985. Whether you have 1 hour @ month or 10, there is a need for you. Every mother is a gift to her baby; help **AND** show her just how much. **The poverty rate of single mothers** is twice that of single fathers. **AND** is transforming single motherhood. Will you join us?

## Fifty Years after Humanae Vitae

A conference reviewing **this encyclical by Pope Paul VI** will be held at Chillicothe St Peter parish hall on Saturday, July 7, from noon until 4 PM. Speakers will be Sr Rene Mirkes, Dr Ashley K Fernandes, Fr Adam Streitenberger OFS, and Dr Alicia Thompson.

## Drug Addiction & Behavioral Health

Our Diocese continues addressing the drug addiction crisis with a two-day Trauma Informed Care (TIC) training

occurring at Bishop Watterson High School's Dominican Hall on Monday and Tuesday, June 11-12. This approach acknowledges the role of trauma in addressing behavioral health problems. The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services will assist in the training. Cost is \$25 per person. To register as a team or individual from a parish and/or school, visit <https://columbuscatholic.org/tic-training>.

## The Chair

"From the Chair with Bishop Campbell" airs monthly on St Gabriel Catholic Radio AM820. Bishop Campbell takes your questions on Tuesday, June 5, from 5 to 6 PM during his live call in show. St Pius X students will give their reflections on how they plan to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus this summer. Call St Gabriel Catholic Radio at (614) 459-4820 to ask your questions about the Catholic faith and growing in holiness.

# Sharing His Love, Encouraging Hope

## Bishop's Annual Appeal: 3rd Report

BAA 2018 week 3	families	participating	pledged	average gift	paid	BAA goal
St Bernadette	450	112	\$33,540	\$ 299	\$17,855	\$36,305
% of goal		25%	92%		49%	
St Mary	135	39	\$14,505	\$372	\$8,635	\$13,121
% of goal		29%	111%		66%	

The 4<sup>th</sup> BAA report could not be completed by our early bulletin deadline. Look for the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> reports in next week's bulletin.

## Appeal Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we are ever grateful for the many gifts which you have bestowed upon us. We are especially thankful, dear Father, for the gift of your Son, Jesus. May his Sacred Heart help us to know your infinite love for us, and may it give us the courage to continue his work in the world by **sharing his love and encouraging hope**. We pray that you will help us all respond to your love by imitating your generosity, as we consider the needs of all people in our diocese. May we touch the lives and hearts of others by our participation in this appeal. May you send your Holy Spirit to dwell with us always, so that all we say and do will give you fitting praise. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## The Appeal

The BAA is a diocesan appeal for financial support. Your gift to the BAA will directly support these critical areas of need:

- Catholic education for our children through tuition assistance, capital repair grants for high schools, and operating aid for schools.
- The education and formation of seminarians discerning and answering the call to the priesthood.
- The vital work of serving parish catechetical leaders in parish and school religious education programs.
- Marriage preparation and enrichment programs supporting the vocation of traditional marriage, natural family planning programs, and family faith formation events.
- The formation and ministry of permanent deacons.
- The education, spiritual cultivation, and evangelization of our multi-ethnic Catholic communities and the parishes serving them.
- The coordination of all liturgies presided at by Bishop Campbell, and sponsorship of diocesan events such as the Rite of Election and adult Confirmation.
- Unified programs for youth and young adult ministry that deepen the faith and involvement of our younger generations.

## Making contact

St Bernadette Parish [stbernadetteparish.net](http://stbernadetteparish.net)  
 St Bernadette school [stbernlan@cducation.org](mailto:stbernlan@cducation.org),  
[www.stbernadetteschool.com](http://www.stbernadetteschool.com)

Bremen St Vincent de Paul (740) 569-7738  
 Lancaster St Vincent de Paul [www.svdplancasteroh.com](http://www.svdplancasteroh.com)  
 Diocese of Columbus [www.columbuscatholic.org](http://www.columbuscatholic.org)  
 Angels Nurture & Disciple (AND) [www.angelsAND.org](http://www.angelsAND.org)

# The Holiest Gift

Today is the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, known by its Latin name “Corpus Christi.” It is a day to think about and celebrate Holy Communion. It is the thing that Jesus gave us at the Last Supper. It wasn’t just a little nostalgic ritual Jesus gave us at the Last Supper. It was **bread that was changed into his own body**. He became food **to nourish us**. This is a **great completion to the Word becoming flesh**. That flesh in turn becomes food. Our food!

A lot of beautiful symbolism? Well, yes. But a **substantial reality**.

At the Last Supper, “He took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to them saying ‘Take and **eat this: this is my body**.’”

As if that weren’t enough, he said to the twelve men who were gathered with him at the Last Supper:

“**Do this** in remembrance of me.”

And there is still more. In the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to Saint John we read that Jesus said, over and again,

- that it was **necessary that a person eat the bread** that comes from heaven,
- that **he himself was that true bread**,
- that it endures **for eternal life**.

Those words of Jesus sounded strange to the people who had been following Jesus. Strange even though they had seen and appreciated how he had worked the wonder of multiplying the loaves of bread. They asked how this bread of life he was talking about could possibly be, this business about how his identification of his very own self with the bread that he would soon give, and about how this would provide lasting life ... well, **this seemed just too much to believe**. For people who didn’t really believe in Jesus.

When **some started walking away** he didn’t try to ease up on the difficulty of the teaching. He just asked his Twelve if they too were going to leave him.

St Peter got it right when he responded, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have **the words of eternal life**. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

This gets us close to **what Catholics are**: We are the **followers of Jesus who believe that Jesus gave us himself, completely and effectively, for our food**, when he said those words at the Last Supper. Those words of his actually changed the bread and wine into the substance of his own body and blood.

It still looked and tasted and spilled and crumbled and all that, just like bread or wine. But now it was, in its substance, the body and blood of Christ. And the words of Jesus enabled his twelve Apostles to take bread and wine and do likewise.

**They did it. And it happened.**

We learn that the earliest Church was having such holy meals in his memory from our reading of Saint Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. They did it. And it happened.

And it was these men – and only them, in spite of the fact that **they were not the best or the brightest or the closest** to Jesus – who would be the officiators at the weekly holy communion celebrations. They did what the Lord had done at the Last Supper and had told them to do, and they did it in remembrance of him. They did it. And it happened.

And what they did changed the bread and wine. It relived, but **in a way that wasn’t bloody or gruesome**, that bloody thing that had happened on Calvary when Jesus was put to death for mankind. For that thing that happened, that death, was not simply the heart-breakingly vile killing of a fine young man.

No, the Church had a very much richer understanding of what happened on Calvary: It was a sacrifice, according to the Letter to the Hebrews, **a sacrifice with an offering by a priest of the very best gift we had to offer to God** as an indication of how deeply we wanted to be connected to God again, to have our brokenness fixed.

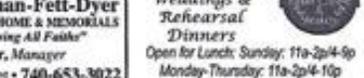
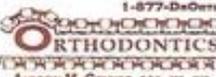
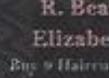
It wasn’t just any old animal who was sacrificed; it was Jesus who was true God and true man. It wasn’t just any old priest appointed by some law or custom; it was Jesus who was truly God. It wasn’t just some mythic sacrifice; it was the actual and intensely-felt dying **of Jesus who was truly man**.

It was very much more and very much more amazing than anyone else realized at the time it happened. But Jesus knew what it amounted to. And the night before he died **he gave his disciples a way to become utterly involved in this whole amazing business**.

Not involved nostalgically like sentimental alumni at a reunion of the school of his students who could recall how it had once been when old Jesus was around. Not involved like spectators who could cheer him on. But **involved as participants at a meal** that was also that same sacrifice, **that eternally-present sacrifice**.

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord. It doesn’t get any better than this!

—Father Kessler

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