

My brothers and sisters in Christ.

Words can have great power and meaning. Thinking of the most famous words shared in the last century – how they have had an impact from Martin Luther King Jr's "I have a dream...to.. Only Thing We Have to Fear Is Fear Itself" from FDR...and Reagan's famous speech - "Mr. Gorbachev, Tear Down This Wall!" But are these the most important words ever spoken on this earth? No, they are not – not even closer. There were many memorable words from kings to Presidents, but the most important words ever spoken were "This is my body...This is my blood." These words Jesus shared with his apostles in the upper room at the Last Supper have shaped the life and spirituality of billions of people.

Today's feast of Corpus Christi, also known as the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ is a feast that is over seven centuries old and it is a feast that is very Catholic. Today we reflect on the heart of the Catholic life, the Eucharist, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament.

Jesus' gift to the church on the night before he died was not a gift of parables or his blessing but of her very own self under the form of bread and wine. In the Eucharist, we have Jesus himself, his body and blood, soul and divinity. When we receive Holy Communion, we have a closer contact with Jesus than was possible for anyone during his earthly life. In the Eucharist, the distance between us and Christ vanishes.

Jesus gave us the Eucharist as a place of unity to draw his followers to himself and to

each other. It is, therefore, an odd thing that the Eucharist, the Mass, has been a place of contention and debate for many years, such as 2011 changes to the words from the Lord be with you, an also with you to and with your spirit. This could be because the Mass is central to our lives and we are sensitive to any changes that are introduced into it. We are sensitive about it because we care about it. There have been debates about translations, gestures, posture, how to receive communion, who can distribute communion, and who can receive communion, etc.

It is important to remember that receiving Holy Communion is not a simply personal gesture but a public proclamation that we are in communion with Christ and with the Church. Catholic Christians who have not followed the Gospel, who are in mortal sin, whose lifestyle depart from Gospel living, and who do not believe what the Church teaches should refrain from going to Holy Communion. This is traditional, universal and common teaching in our Church.

The deeper issue for each one of us is not so much of whether another person is receiving worthily, but rather am I receiving Holy Communion worthily. Am I in communion, which means one with, the Church and all her teachings, and not just one major teaching but with all the Church teaches and holds to be true? Am I in a state of grace; meaning not being in a state of mortal sin? Am I trying to be an honest follower of Jesus? Communion is more than just receiving the body and/or blood of Christ; it is an act of renewal of our commitment to

Jesus Christ. It is a statement of belief in the real presence, that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist, and of fidelity to the Church and all her teachings. It is a commitment to unity with fellow Catholics all over the world as well. Coming to Holy Communion means all of this. This is why when we come to Communion our Church asks us to say one profound word – no matter what way we hear it: The Body of Christ, Corpus Christi, Corp du Crist, El Cuerpo de Christo, ilCorpi di Cristi, we all as united Catholics say the same one word response – Amen. Or A-men depending on your pronunciation. But Amen, it means I believe, it is a statement that everything that Jesus asks of me, everything the Church teaches, that this truly in front of me the body and blood of Jesus Christ, not a mere symbol or a nice gesture it is truly Jesus – I believe. AMEN!

When we receive Holy Communion, it is not a mechanical gesture but a profound action with many meanings. We are all called to examine our life and see if it connects with the Gospel message. If we are not in mortal sin but are still not the Catholic Christians we should be, and trust me none of us is perfect – especially the guy up in front of the ambo, then we need to ask for the Lord to give us the graces we need to become stronger followers of Jesus, to be more faithful to the Lord and the Church.

On this feast day of the Body and Blood of Christ, we can examine ourselves in regard to the Eucharist in many ways. Do we try to make the words and sacrifice of the Mass our words and sacrifice by our actual participation in the Mass? Do we seek out

the Sunday Mass when we are on vacation or away from our parish? Do we receive in a way that worthily respects the Body and Blood of Christ not only physically but spiritually as well? Do we reflect on the miracle we received or do we think about the football game or how to get out of the parking lot?

St. Ignatius Loyola, one of my personal favourite saints has a beautiful poem that reflects on the gift of the Eucharist. I would like to share it with you this evening/morning it's call Anima Christi, meaning soul of Christ

Soul of Christ, sanctify me
Body of Christ, save me
Blood of Christ, inebriate me
Water from the side of Christ, wash me
Passion of Christ, strengthen me
O good Jesus, hear me
Within Thy wounds hide me
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee
From the malignant enemy defend me
In the hour of my death call me
And bid me come unto Thee
That with thy Saints I may praise Thee
Forever and ever.
Amen

This Corpus Christi Sunday is a good time to refresh at the Mass, the full significance of receiving Holy Communion, and the dignity of prayer for ourselves and others before the Blessed Sacrament either in the tabernacle or when it is right before our eyes on this very altar. The Eucharist is at the heart and center of the Church's life? Is it the heart and center of our lives.