

Corpus Christi-C

June 19, 2022

St. Patrick

“On the night when he was betrayed...Jesus said, ‘This is my Body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’”

Walking down the aisles of the grocery store, I’m increasingly stunned by how much the cost of food items is increasing. A gallon of milk used to be under \$3; now, it’s more than \$3.50. The prices just keep rising.

That’s why we’re continuing with our Mobile Food Pantry here at St Patrick’s. Too many folks just can’t cover the cost for basic food items. Two days ago, we had 500 cars for our Mobile Food Pantry, people needing help with their food. Many cars get here hours before we give out the food. It just shows how much they need food, especially as it is getting so costly.

This Sunday we celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ. Each year this feast is placed in the church’s calendar two weeks after the Pentecost Festival.

Bread and wine. By our calling upon the Holy Spirit, and by the prayer of the church joined together, our High Priest Jesus changes the bread and wine into his very Body and Blood. They sustain us in our hunger and thirst. He feeds us with his very self.

Oh, Friends, I love as you process up and receive this gift with open hands. You come forward in the hunger of your soul and are fed wonderfully. **“Do this in memory of me.”** Indeed! But we need to take in and savor how expensive this sacred food and drink are. It cost Jesus’ very life. That body, given for us, hung on the cross, and his blood poured out from his wounds and sliced side. Ah, there’s no inflation in this food and drink. Jesus paid a hefty price to give us the gift of his very self. At each Mass, every Eucharist, we celebrate and give thanks for this precious gift, as we remember his passion and celebrate his resurrection.

On this Feast of Corpus Christi, “the Body of Christ,” I see a close parallel to what we do at our regular Mobile Food Pantry and during each Mass. Both are processions. You see, at the Mobile Food Pantry, I position myself right before cars inch forward to get their supply of food. I’m like the Walmart greeter, welcoming the persons in each car. Friday morning, right after me, a 6’3” young

man wearing a UT Health Science T-Shirt quickly carried to the cars a gallon of milk in each hand. He did so untiringly for more than three hours. At the end, his clothes, hair and black skin were drenched in sweat. Through all the time, however, he had a genuine, broad smile for each person. He and other volunteers showed what the 17th century hero for the poor, St. Vincent de Paul, taught, **“The poor are your masters and you are their servants”** (1). That young man showed how happy we are that they are here. We try to welcome them—each in the car—as if they were Christ himself coming. He is!

At times, however, I’ve heard slurs against folks who come for the Mobile Food Pantry. Never from our volunteers! From others, I’ve heard insults by people who judge some of our guests as fakes who drive fancy cars and come for free food. You know, I really don’t see that, nor is it for me to size up each guest as they come. My calling is to let each person in those cars know that they are special.

They are.

It’s the same for the procession of those who inch forward and humbly receive the Body and Blood of Christ here at Mass. *Who can...who can’t come forward for Holy Communion?* Some bishops, and others, have put barriers up, saying certain folks *can’t* come for Communion. They make the Eucharist, then, a weapon which excludes others (2). From the very beginning of his ministry as Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis teaches, **“The Eucharist...is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak”** (3).

The Eucharist is a precious gift to us from Jesus. *None* of us is worthy. Don’t we all say that in the last prayer before receiving Communion?— **“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. But only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.”**

Years ago, a mother told me that, after her young daughter heard those words of the community, “Only say the word, and my soul shall be healed,” her child whispered to her, “Moma, what’s the ‘word’?”

The word, St. Patrick’s, is “mercy.” As we inch forward to receive his very self, Jesus wants each of us to know that *we* all are special.

We are.

- (1) Quotation of St. Vincent de Paul, by Robert Ellsberg in *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses For Our Time* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), pg. 421
- (2) See Cardinal Robert McElroy, “The Eucharist is being weaponized for political ends. This must not happen” in *America*, May 5, 2021.
- (3) Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, November 24, 2013; article #47.

General Intercessions

Corpus Christi

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Nourish our hearts by your living Word and through your Body and Blood in the Eucharist; we pray to you, O Lord—

Unite peoples in a rich tapestry of diversity. As we celebrate the Juneteenth Holiday, empower us to defeat racism in our church and nation, leading us to show your justice; we pray to you, O Lord—

Bless fathers who have given life and love. Encourage them, and all who show fatherly care, in their vocation; we pray to you, O Lord—

Console those fathers who have lost a child through death, so that they might experience the support of family and friends; we pray to you, O Lord—

Shower your tenderness through our care to all suffering from the horrid heat, to those abandoned in their pain, and those caught up in sickness; we pray to you, O Lord—

Embrace in eternity all who have died, especially fathers who have died, as well as Ann Cowan, Mary Gifford Scruggs; and Mary Rubin, at the 4th anniversary of her death; we pray to you, O Lord—

