

Sunday June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ 'Corpus Christi'

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the guidance we receive to overcome these strange times, and continuing to pray for all our needs at this time.

And welcome to another beautiful Sunday Feast, that of 'Corpus Christi,' The Most holy Body and Blood of Christ.

Over the past eighteen months we have all had to make many sacrifices, even though enforced to an extent, especially at the very first Lockdown last March, when we had a 'Eucharistic Fast' which did not allow us to come together for Mass. Perhaps this brought home to us how much value to us our celebrations of the Eucharist are. We have had to 'sacrifice' the greatest sacrifice, that is the Holy Mass of Our Lord.

In earliest days, the meaning of sacrifice was always been something involving the shedding of blood, as we see in our First Reading, Exodus 24:3-8. Throughout Old Testament times, both Jews and other world faiths regarded blood as life itself, and as all life comes from God, something sacred. To misuse it was sacrilege. But it could be used in the service of God, in fact it was a very powerful way of saying that those who made a blood sacrifice acknowledged their total dependence on God. Everything, including their very life, was a gift from God and through the blood – by Old Testament times – of an animal, they gave it back to him.

Great importance was attached to such offerings. The Letter to the Hebrews, (Hebrews 9:11-15, our Second Reading) which was probably the text of a talk given to a group of convert Jewish priests, shows that, though now Christians, they still looked back with nostalgia and admiration to the wonderful animal sacrifices and sprinkling of animals blood within the elaborate rites that had taken place in the temples in Jerusalem. In response the author of the Letter (because it wasn't written by St. Paul, which is a common mistake) reminds them that all the animal and blood sacrifices of the past were just a pale foreshadowing of the Eucharist. The blood of their sacrifices was nothing more than a ritual, but with the Eucharist comes an actual sharing in the very holiness of God himself.

This truth, the reality and power of the body and blood of Christ, comes across even more clearly in the accounts of the Institution of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Looking towards his crucifixion, in today's Gospel, Mark 14:12-16,22-26, Jesus' words and actions portray the violence of his impending death: his body will be broken, like the bread, his blood will be poured like the wine. But far, far

more than just being a symbol, Jesus leads us into the **reality** of every future celebration of the Eucharist in memory of him: this *is* my body, his body, he says, this *is* my blood, his blood, he says, being the blood of the covenant. This mention of the covenant would take all apostles, and all the first listeners to the Eucharist mass, back to their old animal sacrifices of the past on Mount Sinai, which sealed the Old Testament covenant between God and Man. Jesus made it clear at the Last Supper, that the Eucharistic species is truly his body and blood, his body and blood which we receive in Holy Communion, the new and everlasting covenant sealed between God and man.

Today's feast is our annual invitation to deepen our appreciation of the Eucharist, its symbolism of old yes, but today and everyday at every Mass its very present reality. And today, on this great Feast of Corpus Christi, through our Holy Communion, once again renew our communion with God, always pledging to live by this new and everlasting covenant, sealed by the sacrifice of his body and his blood.

*Gracious God,*

*we thank you that in the Sacrament of your Most holy Body and Blood  
you assure us of your goodness and love.*

*Accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving  
and help us to grow in love and obedience,*

*that we may serve you in the world*

*and finally be brought to that table*

*where all your saints feast with you forever.*

*At the table where you graciously feed us*

*with the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation,*

*may we who reach out our hands to receive this sacrament*

*be strengthened in your service;*

*may we joyously sing your praises*

*and tell of your glory and truth in our lives;*

*and may we who have seen the greatness of your love in the Sacraments*

*see you face to face in your kingdom*

*and come to worship you with all your saints for ever.*

*Father, we offer ourselves to you*

*as a living sacrifice.*

*Send us out in the power of your Spirit*

*to live and work for your praise and glory*

*through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Let's remind ourselves how lucky we are to be able to socially-distanced come together to celebrate Mass, and look forward to a true opening up of our celebrations soon. Let us sing the classic 'O Bread

of Heaven' (and I love the brass accompaniment to this version – this musical duo definitely need a little bit of exploring!) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flTD00XMw-M> And the attached photo was taken at last night's Mass.

A parishioner wrote to me the other day we some 'out of the mouths of babes' stories. I share them with you as a jolly Sunday read! Time for coffee and a chocolate chip cookie!

*A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales. The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small. The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible. The little girl said, 'When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah'. The teacher asked, 'What if Jonah went to hell?' The little girl replied, 'Then you ask him'.*

*A Kindergarten teacher was observing her classroom of children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's work. As she got to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was. The girl replied, 'I'm drawing God.' The teacher paused and said, 'But no one knows what God looks like.' Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, 'They will in a minute.'*

*A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six-year-olds. After explaining the commandment to 'honour' thy Father and thy Mother, she asked, 'Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?' From the back, one little boy (the oldest of a family) answered, 'Thou shall not kill.'*

*One day a little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast on her Brunette head. She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, 'Why are some of your hairs white, Mum?' Her mother replied, 'Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white.' The little girl thought about this revelation for a while and then said, 'Mummy, how come ALL of grandma's hairs are white?'*

*The children had all been photographed, and the teacher was trying to persuade them each to buy a copy of the group picture. 'Just think how nice it will be to look at it when you are all grown up and say, 'There's Jennifer, she's a lawyer,' or 'That's Michael, He's a doctor.' A small voice at the back of the room rang out, 'And there's the teacher, she's dead.'*

*A teacher was giving a lesson on the circulation of the blood . Trying to make the matter clearer, she said, 'Now, class, if I stood on my head, the blood, as you know, would run into it, and I would turn red in the face.' 'Yes,' the class said. 'Then why is it that while I am standing upright in the ordinary positions the blood doesn't run into my feet?' A little fellow shouted, 'Cause your feet ain't empty?'*

*The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Catholic elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The nun made a note and posted on the apple tray: 'Take only ONE. God is watching.' Moving further along the lunch line, at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. A child had written a note, 'Take all you want. God is watching the apples...'*

And perhaps after all that we should pray together Psalm 8. Why? Because Psalm 8 gives us the origin of the phrase '*out of the mouths of babes*'!

*O Lord, our Lord,*

*How excellent is Your name in all the earth,*

*Who have set Your glory above the heavens!*

*Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants*

*You have ordained strength,*

*Because of Your enemies,*

*That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.*

*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,*

*The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,*

*What is man that You are mindful of him,*

*And the son of man that You visit him?*

*For You have made him a little lower than the angels,*

*And You have crowned him with glory and honour.*

*You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;*

*You have put all things under his feet,*

*All sheep and oxen,*

*Even the beasts of the field,*

*The birds of the air,*

*And the fish of the sea*

*That pass through the paths of the seas.*

*O Lord, our Lord,*

*How excellent is Your name in all the earth!*

I hope you are all having a great weekend in the sunshine! Back to school for many of us tomorrow! Hey ho and away we go with the last half of the Summer Term!

And remember, St. Bernadette's is not closed. We're just doing things differently for a while, until we are allowed to gather together once more, more stronger, more faithful, more loving, more creative, and more grateful for the amazing community that is St. Bernadette's.

With love and faith in Jesus.

Fr. P.