

June 6, 2010

The Most Holy Eucharist – really, truly, and substantially the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ – is His most precious gift to us. The Eucharist is the assurance of our salvation: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51).

Jesus is the very heart of our faith. Through Him we share in the very life and love of the Father. He is the Way to the Father. “Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me” (Jn 6:57).

On this Sunday, we give special thanks to God for the precious gift of Jesus’ presence in the Holy Eucharist. Our active participation in Holy Mass and our reception of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is our sustenance for our life’s journey. It is our privileged way of experiencing intimate union with the Lord and with one another in the Lord. It is so important that we are obliged to participate in Holy Mass each Sunday unless excused by illness or another serious reason.

The Vatican II “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” speaks of the importance of Sunday Mass this way: “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all the Church’s power flows.”

Through our participation in Sunday Mass, we remind ourselves and one another who we are, namely, a people called by God to live a life in union with Him. When the Sacred Scriptures are proclaimed during the liturgy, they remind us of the “mighty deeds of the Lord” in our behalf. They also remind us of the Lord’s expectations of how we should relate to Him and to one another.

In each Sunday Mass, we each present ourselves, with all of our joys and pains, our successes and our failures, with Jesus to the Father. In turn, the Father is pleased with this sacrifice and nourishes us with the very Body and Blood of His beloved Son so that we might go forth and recognize the presence of Jesus in those whom we meet, especially the poor and alienated, and bring the love of Christ to them.

In the words of the Venerable John Paul II: “In the humble signs of bread and wine, changed into His Body and Blood, Christ walks beside us as our strength and our food for the journey, and He enables us to become, for everyone, witnesses of hope.”

It is a great concern for me, and I hope for you, that so many of the faithful absent themselves from regular participation in Sunday Mass for little or no reason. I fear that their faith will wither up and die. As our bodies will die without food, so our souls will wither without nourishment. The Venerable John Paul II put it well: “When Sunday loses its fundamental meaning and becomes merely a part of a ‘weekend,’ it can happen that people stay locked within a horizon so limited that they can no longer see the heavens.”

On the other hand, with our regular, active, and faithful participation at Sunday Eucharist, our relationship with the Lord and with one another is intensified and our future glory is assured.

Please use the occasion of this beautiful Feast of the Body and Blood of Our Lord as an opportunity to pray intensely for those who have drifted from regular participation at Sunday Mass and suggest, in a humble and kindly fashion, that they consider returning.