

Homily – Feast of Corpus Christi – 18 June 2017

The key reason for believing in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the unique event of the Holy Communion, the Holy Eucharist. At the Last Supper, the Passover meal, an ancient Jewish celebration of the liberation from slavery, Jesus, the Son of God, transforms the unleavened bread and the cup of wine, of the covenant, into his own body and blood. The exact words of Jesus are very important, “This is my body, this is my blood”. By using the present tense, Jesus is deliberately teaching the world that the Eucharist is a perpetual revealed reality of God’s Divine Sacramental presence in the world. It ratifies Christ’s reaching, “I am with you always, until the end of time”. It demonstrates God’s eternal presence, through all ages and all his universal presence whenever two or more gather in His name.

So, the unleavened bread of the Host is the form through which Jesus makes himself present amongst us. By the gathering of the Baptised faithful, the apostolic commissioning and the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is there. What Jesus asks of us in return, is faithful recognition, following the rites, the rituals that Jesus laid down at the Last Supper. Holy Communion makes the Church to be what it is, founded on Jesus Christ. Through all ages.....

I remember hearing a beautiful story, during the War. A Catholic Army Chaplain, always carried with him, an altar stole, with a relic of a Saint in it, so that he could celebrate Mass, even on the battlefield. On the beaches of Northern France, the Priest got separated from his kit bag with the altar stole in it. A sergeant rescued it from the heat of the battle. He was captured and taken prisoner. During the next three years, he kept the altar stole safely by his side. At the end of the war, he carried it carefully home to his parish and returned it to the priest. During the time in prison, Mass was celebrated in secret. It kept the prisoners together in hope that their liberation would come one day. So, let us remind ourselves of how important Holy Communion is to our lives and our salvation.

Why is this the case?

Firstly, it affirms an intimate union with Christ Jesus. As it says in John 6:57 “As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me”. The growth in our Catholic Christian life depends on the Eucharist, Holy Communion, being nourished by this spiritual food, the food for the journey until the moment of death.

Secondly, Holy Communion is rescuing us from a sinful life and protecting us from all that is ungodly, in the words of St Fulgentius, a Church Father, “Since Christ died for us out of love, when we celebrate the memorial of His death at the moment of sacrifice, we ask that love may be granted to us by the coming of the Holy Spirit.....Having received the gift of love, let us die to sin and live for God”.

Thirdly, the Eucharist is the unity of the mystical body, it makes the Church a living reality. Last week in Dunfermline, I experienced a Mass where Jesus was present amongst over 2,000 people, gathered in the Church, the parish hall and the Carnegie Hall, all sharing in the one Christ, Body, Blood, Soul & Divinity, just as St Margaret had done one thousand years ago, in the same place.

Let me finish with the words of Mother Theresa, who spent hours every day in front of the Blessed Sacrament. “Nowhere on earth are you more welcome. Nowhere on earth are you more loved than by Jesus living and truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. The time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time you will spend on earth.

'To me Jesus is my God,
Jesus is my spouse,
Jesus is my life,
Jesus is my only love,
Jesus is my all in all,
Jesus is my everything.

Amen