



Archbishop of Montreal

Homily
Sunday, June 14, 2020

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ - Year A (Jn 6, 51-58)

“As I live because of the Father, you will live because of me.”

“As I live because of the Father, you will live because of me,” Jesus says to us.

Jesus is humble, much humbler than we are. He who is God, he lives because of the Father. His life is to live by the Father.

We, on the other hand, as God’s creatures with our limitations, are not God. We are loved by God, but we are not God ourselves. Jesus offers us God’s life, and He calls us to live through him. But often, we are reluctant to receive it, and we need time to let Jesus Christ live in us.

How do we live by Jesus Christ?

The first thing that comes to my mind is prayer! When we pray, we open our heart to the grace of Jesus, to the grace of the Lord.

Then there is the Word of God. By meditating on Sacred Scripture and reading it slowly and calmly, we can open our heart to the grace of God. This is how we can live! We live through Jesus Christ, we live by the Word of God.

But there is also the Eucharist. The Eucharist, without excluding other ways by which Jesus Christ is present, is his presence par excellence! “This is my body, given up for you, this is my blood, poured out for you.”

This is my body, this is my blood.

Jesus Christ is present in the Blessed Sacrament of his body and his blood. Jesus, crucified and was resurrected, is indeed present. “This is my body, given up.” The mystery of the cross that is present in this word, and at the same time, the risen Jesus Christ is present as the new covenant.

When we are before the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, we are before Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. We are before him, in his personal presence. We are called to receive him, to enter into communion with him, to be in communion with his presence so that he may live in us. In living in us, he transforms us so that by his grace we live by him, by his love, by his peace, by his mercy, we may fully live through Jesus Christ.

Living in the presence of the Resurrected now asks us to open up to his grace: Do we really want to live through Jesus Christ? Do we thirst for Jesus Christ? Do we want to live by the presence of Jesus Christ in us? Are we prepared to make the effort to pray more? Are we prepared for the effort to open Sacred Scripture and read and meditate on the Word of God? When our church doors are open again, are we prepared to make the effort to go to Mass? Let us be ready! Are we ready, today, to make the effort to go to Mass?

During the pandemic, we have been deprived of the Eucharist. The people of God, all across the world, in a stunning and mysterious way, have been deprived of the Eucharist. It forced us to engage in other ways of praying, some that we may already have known, but also finding new ones, either in our personal or in our family life.

For example, we may already have been familiar with the Word of God, but now we might be praying with it more. Perhaps we have become more confident and aware that our family is a small domestic church, a house of prayer, a house of communion where different people come together, as a family, to be of service in society and in the Church.

Parishes looked for ways to be more present in the media, in various ways. Mass continued to be celebrated on television or online, to let the faithful be present even if in a different way. At the same time, we know that virtual presence cannot replace real presence or physical gatherings of the faithful.

Virtual meetings cannot replace life in community! But we cannot deny that this experience widened our horizons. By discovering new ways to be church, our prayer lives have deepened.

In a mysterious way, by knowing that the virtual presence at Mass cannot replace our physical presence, this absence of physical presence allowed our thirst for the Eucharist to grow. Perhaps we used to take the Eucharist for granted as something that was available to us every day, every week, without us being fully aware of it.

Quite often, we take things for granted. But here, we could no longer take it for granted.

For many of the faithful, the physical absence from the Eucharist is a real test! But we could transform this into something greater, as it lets our thirst for Eucharist grow, our hunger for the Eucharist grow. In this way, we are transformed if our awareness of the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of his body and his blood has grown! It will be to the good, if our faith in the Eucharist has grown, if our life became more eucharistic! It was a test to be deprived of the Eucharist, but good will come of it, if it increased our thirst, if it grew our desire to live life according to the call of Jesus Christ, the call to be true disciples who walk with Jesus Christ, faithful to God's commandments and the beatitudes.

We certainly passed through a time of trial, but we were able to leave it stronger and drawn more closely to Jesus Christ. While we could not personally participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, we could deepen our personal prayer and our family prayer, as we journeyed in a personal, community and family way. Our desire to celebrate Mass allowed us to put the Eucharist more into the centre of our life, to better respond to the call of Jesus, to live more fully through Jesus Christ, and, in this way, to live more fully through the Eucharist.

Do we want to live by Jesus Christ? Do we want to live by the Eucharist? This takes us back to the Lord's Day. Each Sunday, we celebrate the Day of the Lord, the day when the people of God are called to live by the Eucharist.

Let us take a moment to pray for each other so that we, as a people of God, not only personally as individuals, but as a people of God, as a family, we rediscover together the importance of Eucharist and its central character in our lives. Let us pray that we can always remain aware that the Eucharist is Jesus Christ given to us and coming into our heart.

Toward the end of this Mass, to end the Mass, there will be a moment when we are sent on mission.

When the prayer after communion is said, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed, and we will pray in silence.

Then, I will stand outside the Cathedral to bless the city. I will bless the city and the world, *Urbi et Orbi*, as is the ancient custom.

Thereafter, I invite you to join me in this adoration in spirit and in truth. May our thirst be ever-increasing that through Jesus Christ, we live by the Eucharist

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