

## Homily for the Corpus Christi Sunday

Well, as probably many of you know, I just got back several days ago from a pilgrimage to Spain, Portugal, and France, where I served as a spiritual director to the 20+ people in our group – including my mother and my aunt. Two of the highlights of this trip were our visits to Lourdes and Fatima. In case you're not familiar with these two towns, they are locations where our Blessed Mother Mary actually appeared to children, revealing to them important messages for the entire world – with themes such as prayer, sacrifice, and the love of God. Actually, those short words don't do these miraculous apparitions much justice. I would encourage you to learn more about them, perhaps online.

Well, anyway, another amazing part of our trip in Portugal was to a town called Santarém, where another miracle occurred – this time with respect to the Eucharist. More specifically, in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century (that's the 1200s) “a young woman overcome with jealousy for her [unfaithful] husband consulted a sorceress, who told her to go to the church and steal a consecrated Host to use for a love potion. The woman stole the Host and hid the Holy Eucharist in a linen cloth that immediately became stained with Blood. Frightened by this, she ran home and opened the handkerchief to see what had happened. To her amazement, she saw that the Blood was gushing from the Host. The confused woman panicked, and so hid the Host in a drawer in her bedroom. That night the drawer began to emit brilliant rays of light, which illuminated the room as if it were daytime. The husband also experienced the strange phenomenon and questioned his wife, who told him everything.

The next day, the couple informed the pastor, who went to the home to remove the Host and return the Blessed Sacrament to the Church of St. Stephen in solemn procession, accompanied by many religious and lay people. The Host bled for three consecutive days, and was then placed in a beautiful container made of beeswax. The Sacred Host is now preserved in an 18th century Eucharistic throne above the main altar.” Scientific testing of this Eucharistic Miracle and the others throughout the world that have occurred over the centuries in various places tells us that this is true human flesh and living human blood. The flesh is often found to consist of cardiac cells (from the heart) and the blood type AB – the same blood type found of the Shroud of Turin.

I must say that it was such a privilege to be in the presence of this Eucharistic Miracle – to really see with my own eyes, what we believe actually takes place when the bread and the wine truly become the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. But for as special as this was, the words quickly came to me that the risen Lord Jesus spoke to doubting Thomas: “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” And then I realized that a real miracle occurs in this church every single time Mass is celebrated. And when the lowly priest speaks the very words of Jesus at the Last Supper, “This is my Body”, “This is my Blood”, the lowly bread and wine become the glorious body and blood of our Savior.

This teaching of the Church stretches all the way back to the beginning. Even the earliest of saints, like Justin Martyr in the year 151 AD declared, “We call this food Eucharist, and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true... For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him... is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus.”

“The story was once told of a Protestant visiting a Catholic church accompanied by his Catholic friend, and after entering, he was admiring the beauty of the architecture and decorations. He was particularly impressed with the altar and the tabernacle on top, which was surrounded by angels and many candles. He asked his Catholic friend, “And what’s in that box there on the table?” The Catholic replied, “Jesus Christ himself is really present in that box. Our faith tells us that.” There was stunned silence. Finally the Protestant said, “If I believed that, I would crawl down this aisle on my knees!”

My friends, if we really understood the gift that we have in the Eucharist we would crawl on our knees to receive Holy Communion. But even though we may not crawl, our worship of Jesus who comes to us as true food and true drink should be no less intense. To help us grow in our fervor for our Eucharistic Lord, our parish celebration of 40 Hours Eucharistic Devotions will take place beginning next Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup> through Tuesday, June 16<sup>th</sup>. Liturgies or prayer services will be held each evening in the church at 7pm. Our guest homilist will be Fr. Michael Letteer of Immaculate Conception, New Oxford. I would ask you to please make the effort as far as your schedules permit to attend these services. Also, I highly encourage you to come to the church during these days for the advertised times of Eucharistic Adoration for personal prayer. Please sign up as you can on the posters at the entrances of the church. But even if you're not able to commit to a certain time, you are invited to stop in and make shorter visits to our Eucharistic Lord. God bless you.