

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST

***AROUND THE WORLD ON CORPUS CHRISTI**

1. Joke. It's summer (or almost) and some people add fun to this season by wearing T-shirts with captivating messages, including messages with Christian meaning. One of such T-shirt messages caught my attention recently: "Don't Make Me Have To Go To Confession". Dear Sisters and Brothers, today, we not only worship our Lord in the Eucharist, at Holy Mass, but we also find ways of confessing to others this faith in our Lord's real presence in the Eucharist, thanks to His words in today's Gospel reading (Jn 6:51-58).

2. Around the World. We go beyond T-shirts to Eucharistic processions. It is happening around the world even as I speak. Here in Omaha, the citywide West Omaha Procession will be the largest event, beginning at 2:00 pm (June 7th, 2026) at Boys Town's Dowd Chapel and ending with Benediction at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church. In China, from Beijing to Shanghai, from the dioceses of Hebei to Jiangxi, on Sunday, June 2, 2024, the Corpus Christi processions were not different from the one led by Pope Leo XIV, from Rome's Basilica of St. John Lateran to the Basilica of St. Mary Major June 22, 2025, or anywhere else in the world, though they add flower carpets in Poland, and in Mexico, children wear inditos or traditional dresses that honor indigenous peoples who love participating in this feast. Yes, the Holy Mass is a participation in the Body of Christ and we, though many, are one body, as we heard in today's 2nd reading. Preaching during Mass on Corpus Christi, a Catholic priest from China, Fr Joseph Chen, said: "every Eucharistic celebration means being united with him; it is an experience of community communion". Wow.

3. Community Communion. What a privilege to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, individually at Holy Communion. We then use this privilege to serve our community through justice and charity. As we celebrate this Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, let us keep the connection between the various ways in which God, through our Lord Jesus Christ is present to us for our earthly lives and eternal salvation. The first reading (Dt 8:2-3, 14b-16a) is a reminder of God's providence including manna. In the Gospel reading (Jn 6:51-58), our Lord uses the manna experience to appeal to the listeners as He promises us the Eucharist: "Jesus said to the ... crowds: '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). Unfortunately, some of his listeners "quarreled among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'" (Jn 6:52). What followed is perhaps the saddest event in Scripture: "As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied

him.” (Jn 6:66). Well, our Lord fulfilled His promise on Holy Thursday as He instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper when He took bread in His hands and said: “Take; this is my body” (Mt 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-25). With these gestures and words, our Lord changed the substance of bread into His body and likewise wine into His blood to nourish us for eternal life. He gave His disciples power to reenact these gestures and words to the same effect: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:20; 1Cor 11:24).

Today’s 2nd reading (1 Cor 10:16-17) focuses on our responsibilities from partaking in the Eucharist. It mentions unity. The Eucharist unites us. This happens when we receive Christ in a state of grace (1 Cor 11:29). Brothers and Sisters, my Eucharistic responsibilities become clearer in terms of the various ways in which Christ is present to us: “Christ Jesus, is present ... in His word; in His Church's prayer, ‘where two or three are gathered in my name,’ (Mt 18:20); in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned, (Mt 25:31-46); in the sacraments of which He is the author, in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the minister. But ‘He is present . . . most especially in the Eucharistic species.’” (Vatican II, Sacrosanctum Concilium 7). Therefore, as I receive Christ in the Eucharist, I am strengthened to act justly and do charity to Christ in my neighbors, especially the less fortunate, all over the world. This is the mission that follows the Mass. Faithful to Scripture, St Thomas Aquinas knitted together these themes of Eucharistic Adoration, Justice and Charity in the 5 well-known hymns he composed for today’s Feast: Adoro te Devote, Lauda Sion Salvatorem (which is the Sequence for today’s Mass), Sacris Solemniis (with its 6th stanza, the Panis Angelicus), Pange Lingua Gloriosi (including its last 2 stanzas, the Tantum Ergo), and lastly, Verbum Supernum (with its last 2 stanzas, the O Salutaris). Now you won’t like to miss Benediction! To God be the glory as we exercise our Eucharistic faith! Amen.

****We are grateful to Fr Andrew Ekpenyong of St Mary Magdalene Catholic Church Omaha, USA for accepting to be our online homilist this year, 2026***