**Deacon Steve’s Reflection on the Sunday Readings**

**May 27, 2018 – The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)**

**Exodus 24: 3-8 Psalm 116: 12-13, 15-18**

**Hebrews 9: 11-15 Mark 14: 12-16, 22-16**

Along with many others, I vividly remember my First Holy Communion, when I was only seven years old. Dressed in white suit, shirt and tie, I eagerly anticipated the sacrament, following months of preparation by the good sisters at Immaculate Conception Church in Trenton. Although I did not fully understand the significance of the Holy Eucharist then, as I have grown and matured in faith, I have come to realize how essential the sacrament is, not just in worship, but also in every aspect of my life. I cannot imagine my life apart from my faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which has saved me, and the Eucharist that nourishes and sustains me, in spite of my own sinfulness and imperfection.

The Solemnity of The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, traditionally known as *Corpus Christi*, is a profound reminder of the central tenet of Catholic Christianity, namely that Our Lord Jesus Christ is physically present to the members of his body, the Church, each time we celebrate the Sacred Liturgy. The sacrifice of the Lord is made manifest in the Mass and his Precious Body and Blood is brought to substantial reality in the consecration of the ordinary forms of bread and wine. In today’s reading from the Gospel of Mark, we hear the account of the Last Supper, where Jesus himself initiated this great mystery of faith: *“While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, gave to them, and said, ‘Take it; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’”* His words, which prefigured the sacrifice he would soon endure on the cross of Calvary, offer his promise of eternal presence and hope to his disciples, and for all men and women who embrace the reality of our Catholic faith.

There are some who do not believe in the real presence of Our Lord, that the mass is merely a symbolic representation, and that Christ only spoke metaphorically when he shared the Last Supper with his disciples. However, this contradicts all of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, by which we are brought to eternal life. In particular, it ignores the words of Christ himself in all of the Gospels, most notably in his teaching found in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, a small excerpt of which is proclaimed in today’s Gospel Acclamation: *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord; whoever eats this bread will live forever.”* When many of his disciples left Jesus upon hearing these words, he did not waver from his teaching, but instead, emphasized the necessity of this in order to remain disciples. The countless examples of sacrifice, suffering and even martyrdom, offered by the faithful in testimony to the reality of the Eucharist, bear witness to power of the Precious Body and Blood.

The Church teaches in the *Catechism*, that: *“The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church’s life, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, offered once for all on the cross to his Father; by this sacrifice he pours out the graces of salvation on his Body which is the Church.”*

Christ saved us once and for all through his sacrifice on Calvary. He, who was fully divine and fully human, conquered sin and death. The celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, the climax of which is contained in the mystery of his Precious Body and Blood, is an eternal reminder of God’s infinite love for humanity. Its graces are immeasurable, and strengthen us in our journey to the Heavenly Kingdom. As we heard in the Letter to the Hebrews: *“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.”*

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