

HOMILY ~

THE MOST HOLY BODY & BLOOD OF CHRIST

JUNE 10/11, 2023

I attended two really nice social gatherings recently. One was a barbeque on Memorial Day, and the other was a retirement party for a good friend. These gatherings had about 20 of my good friends that I have known for 30+ years. It was really nice to be with this group. It is a group of people where I really feel I belong. I realized that we have not had a gathering like this since COVID, and I really missed it. I see some of the people individually or in small groups, but some I have not seen much since COVID. It reminded me of how important it is to have a community where you feel that you belong. I have been at St. Edith for 12 years. This is a community where I really feel that I belong. I have thought about moving parishes recently; and I really do not want to start over again at this stage of my ministry, so I am not going anywhere. I think we all need to have a group, a community where we feel we belong. I am lucky to have two of these groups.

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of Christ. Today in the Gospel Reading, Jesus tells us: *“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.”* That is how important it is to receive the Eucharist regularly. Not only is it important to receive the Eucharist, it is also important how we receive the Eucharist. Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper surrounded by his closest friends, a group where they all must have felt that they belonged. We have continued that tradition. No one receives the Eucharist alone. The preferred way to receive the Eucharist is within the celebration of the Mass. We receive the Eucharist within a community of people where you belong. At the beginning of COVID when we could not have public Masses, the Archbishop asked priests to celebrate a private Mass each day. I did it, but it was not very spiritually nourishing. I missed the community. You cannot have much of a celebration alone. As we began having public Masses, people told me that it was then they realize how much they missed the Eucharistic celebrations.

During COVID, I think we got used to these virtual communities; and that is just not the same. So many people are working from home. You no longer have a group where you belong. My brother told me that he works most of the time from home, but there are some days where he needs to go into work in person. He no

longer has his own desk at work. He just signs out a workstation when he gets there. He is no longer surrounded by the same people when he goes to work. Sometimes he does not even know the people. He no longer feels like part of a team. He does not feel the same commitment to the company, because our real commitment is to people not to a company. Work is no longer a place where he feels he belongs. My niece just finished her junior year in nursing school. Her freshman year was all online, and her second year was mostly online. It was not until her junior year that she had school friends and that she felt part of a group where she belonged. She said that she feels that she really missed something important for two years. Our streamed Masses helped us to feel somewhat connected to the community at St. Edith, but I think that quickly wore off. We will continue to stream Masses because there are people who are homebound and cannot get to Mass; but it is just not the same. People have become so addicted to social media that it is starting to replace our sense of community. Is social media a place where you feel you belong? Social media is not reality. To have a community where you belong, you have to be with a community that is real. I have talked to a number of people recently that have told me that they were talking to someone. They were not talking at all. They were texting. It is not the same.

Church is a place where we still have community. It may be the only place where you have a real community. When you come here to celebrate Mass, you should have the feeling that this is a place where you belong. Even if you go to a Catholic Church where you have never been before, there is still some feeling of belonging. The more involved you get with the community, the more you feel that you belong. I invite everyone to come to St. Edith regularly and get involved in the community. This is a place where you can belong.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim