

Corpus Christi 2016
May 28-29

Homily:

Mary, our Mother, we give ourselves totally to you as your possession and property. Please make of us, of all that we are and have, whatever most pleases you. Let us be fit instruments, in your holy and immaculate hands, for bringing the greatest possible glory to God. Amen.

Bishop Paul Zipfel from the Diocese of Bismarck was the director of a priests' retreat in June of 1994. He told a story that went something like this...

While giving a tour of our Cathedral, the group passed by the tabernacle. A man noticed my genuflection. Looking at the tabernacle he asked, "What is that?" In general terms I explained to him our Eucharist and that when the bread and wine are consecrated they become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The man looked puzzled. He pointed at the tabernacle and asked, "Do you mean to say that right now your God is in there?" "Yes," I responded. He added, "If that were true I would never leave this place."

Sometimes it takes the perspective of an outsider to bring our beliefs into sharp focus. At this Eucharist bread and wine are blessed and become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Bread and wine are blessed; Jesus Christ is broken and shared.

Jesus Christ is broken—this seems hardly possible. Throughout his ministry, the adversaries of Jesus looked for opportunities to discredit him and harm him. His adversaries did not break him. Jesus was tempted by the devil. The devil could not break him. Jesus suffered humiliation and torture. These could not break him. Jesus was crucified—he died on the cross. Not even the cross could break him.

Jesus emptied himself of his divinity—he became human. In obedience to the Father, Jesus took our sins upon himself. It was for our sins that he suffered and died. Jesus was broken because of one thing only, his obedience. And his obedience was rooted not in fear but in love. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16). Jesus was broken for us and for the world; He was broken for our sins.

Sometimes we feel distant from Jesus. We feel distant from him in our sin. Sometimes we can feel distant from him when we are sick and when our faith is shaken. When we feel distant from him, we cannot forget that Jesus took on our humanity. He knows us! He knows our joys and our sorrows. He knows our struggles and our sins. He knows us better than we know ourselves. And it was precisely for our sins that Jesus was broken. It is our sickness and our faith that his resurrection seeks to heal.

Before the invitation to communion, the Body of Christ is broken in this church. I take the largest host and I break to pieces. On earth, Jesus was broken for us in his suffering. In every age he is

broken for us in the Eucharist. In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul reminds us of Jesus' words at the last supper, "This is my body that is for you." It is Jesus that we receive in Holy Communion—a communion that forgives our sins and heals our souls. It is our God who is reserved in our tabernacle.

Today's gospel story (Luke 9:11-17) reminds us that Jesus' desire to share himself is overwhelming. His disciples could not imagine how the crowd could be fed. Jesus "took the loaves, said the blessing, broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd." Five loaves fed five thousand men; even the leftovers abounded!

In Holy Communion we receive Jesus who forgives us and heals us, but he is not for us alone. At the end of Mass, we are sent to love and to serve the Lord! In other words, we are to share him with a world that is broken. This is why we cannot remain in this place, even though our God is in our tabernacle. Christ would have his body sent from here to heal and forgive, to love and to sanctify the world.