

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR CORPUS CHRISTI
2ND JUNE 2013

Every year the Church celebrates “The body and blood of Christ”; and every week we celebrate Mass...but how often do we think about what is happening? (showing the book) I suspect that often we act out of routine, so we need at times to be reminded of what is actually happening. We have wonderful symbolism and I am just going to mention a few.

When we come into church, many of us dip our hands in holy water and sign ourselves with the cross. This symbolizes our baptism and the fact that we are now making this statement of faith for ourselves. In a way it should make us briefly reflect on how baptism has set us at one with God and started us on our journey with him. Also, we invoke the Trinity, which Father spoke about last week, as we sign ourselves Father Son and Holy Spirit. (the open hand represents the 5 wounds of Jesus or in some Eastern churches where the thumb and first two fingers represent the Trinity and the remaining two fingers are kept pressed into the palm representing the divine and human nature of Christ).

Then, hopefully, as we go to our places we genuflect facing the tabernacle – because Jesus is really present there.

We have the procession, when we walk behind the crucifix....so we are reminded of our Lord crucified and we are following in his footsteps.

And before we heard the Gospel we made the sign of the cross again, this time on our foreheads, lips and heart....let the words we hear be in our minds, on our lips and in our hearts. We have our intellect, our mind, let’s use it. We also have our hearts, let’s use our hearts as well because there are some things that our minds will never be able to understand properly, but which we can know in our hearts. And this brings me to the mystery of today’s feast.

In the first reading, a king and high priest offers bread and wine to celebrate Abram’s victory over his foes. (Melchizedek means king of righteousness, and he is king of Salem, the future Jerusalem, and salem means peace). Melchizedek in the bible is somewhat a mystery, he represents a never ending priesthood and by blessing Abram we learn that he is even greater than Abram was. When St Paul refers to Jesus as a priest forever according to the order of Mechizedek this indicates Jesus is the never ending king and high priest, so the sacrifice he offers is both unique and perfect.

And St Paul makes it clear that Jesus took bread, broke it and said “This is my body, which is for you; then, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.” These words are pretty direct and whilst our minds hear them, it has to be our hearts that believe them, for it is a mystery. Pay attention to them as Father repeats those same words Jesus spoke whilst he elevates first the host and then the chalice, and if your mind wanders the bell is rung three times to help bring your focus back.

And when Father shows us all the host held above the chalice and says “Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb”. Note that now the host is in two, Jesus body has been broken just as he broke the bread at the last supper and just as his body was broken on the cross.

In the miracle of the fish and loaves, Jesus prefigures the blessing of the Eucharist and he uses the same words and order he used at the last supper, (and at Jesus celebration of the Eucharist with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.) This multiplication of the bread is blatantly impossible in human terms – our minds cannot explain it – just as our minds cannot explain what will happen on the altar in a few minutes time, when through the Holy Spirit the bread and wine we bring up as an offering truly become his body and blood. Let our hearts believe this truth, don’t try to rationalize it, we can’t.

Then when we come to the altar during communion, whether to receive the host or for a blessing (please come for a blessing if unable to receive), since we are approaching Jesus himself let’s get rid of any casualness and make our approach reverent.

Rev Jonathan de Kretser