



Corpus Christi – June 6, 2010

Abbot's Homily

Dear friends, the Holy Catholic Church teaches as follows concerning the Eucharist:

The Most Holy Eucharist is the most august sacrament, in which Christ the Lord himself is contained, offered and received, and by which the Church constantly lives and grows.

The Church teaches first, then, that in the Eucharist Christ the Lord himself is *contained*, that is, the Church teaches the *Real Presence* of Christ in the Eucharist. It is our faith that at the consecration the whole substance of the bread is changed into the Body of Christ and the whole substance of the wine is changed into the Blood of Christ. After the consecration, there is no bread on the paten. Instead, the Body of Christ is there. Only the appearances of bread remain, under which is the Body of Christ. After the consecration, there is no wine in the chalice. Instead, the Blood of Christ is there. Only the appearances of wine remain, under which is the Blood of Christ. Moreover, since the whole humanity of Christ – Body, Blood and soul – is now present, glorified, in heaven, and is eternally united to his divinity in the very Person of the Son of God, it follows that where the Body of Christ is, there also are his Blood, his soul and his divinity, and where the Blood of Christ is, there also are his Body, his soul and his divinity. Therefore, the whole Christ is really present under each Eucharistic species.

Again, the Church teaches that in the Eucharist Christ is *offered*, that is, that the Eucharist is a *Sacrifice*. At the consecration, first, by the very words of Christ ‘This is my Body . . . given up for you’, by one single act the bread is changed into the Body of Christ and the Body of Christ is offered to God, and then, by the very words of Christ ‘This is the cup of my blood . . . shed for you’, by one single act the wine is changed into the Blood of Christ and the Blood of Christ is offered to God. This sacramental separation and offering of the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ is a representation to the senses of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, but since it is sacramental, it also contains what it signifies. Therefore, it is not simply a commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, nor is it a repetition of that sacrifice. Rather, the consecration miraculously makes present the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross in a sacramental way. The Eucharist, then, is a true sacrifice; it is the re-presentation of the very sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, now offered in an unbloody rather than bloody manner, for the purpose of applying the fruits of that sacrifice to each of us. Therefore, we should frequently ask that the Eucharistic sacrifice be offered for one or more of the four purposes of sacrifice: for praise of God; for thanksgiving to God; for petition to God, for ourselves or for others; or for expiation made to God, for ourselves, or for others whether living or dead.



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Finally, the Church teaches that in the Eucharist Christ is *received*, received under the Eucharistic species as nourishment for the soul which preserves and increases the divine life of the soul which we call grace, that is, that the Eucharist is a *Sacrament*. A sacrament is an outward, visible and efficacious sign of inward and invisible grace. But the Eucharist, or rather, precisely, the consecrated Eucharistic species, are an outward and visible sign of the Body and Blood of Christ, which they contain, an outward and visible sign of the Body and Blood of Christ as nourishment for the soul, as preserving and increasing the life of the soul, which is grace, and therefore the consecrated species are a sign of grace, and by way of the Body and Blood of Christ they are efficacious in causing that grace. So the Eucharist, and more precisely, the consecrated Eucharistic species, are a sacrament, and infinitely the greatest of the sacraments, because this sacrament contains Christ himself. Therefore, we should frequently receive the sacrament of the Eucharist for the sake of its three effects: the preservation and increase of the life of grace within us; the increase of our union with Christ and with our brothers and sisters in Christ, which is the consequence of grace; the receiving of that pledge of future glory which grace, as the beginning of eternal life, is.

Dear friends, when we pause and try with all our mind and heart to take in what we have just said, it comes into us that what we have said is that the Eucharist is Christ, that it is Jesus Christ the Son of God, that it is God, there, before us. But for the strength of grace which the Lord gives us, we would be utterly overwhelmed. But, in that strength, no wonder that we worship the Eucharist. No wonder that we surround it with every sign of divine honor, no wonder that we carry it in procession, no wonder that we long to receive its blessing. No wonder that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, that in the celebration of the Eucharist we are made to become more fully what we are called to be, and by the grace of God most truly are, Catholic Christians in the bosom of Holy Mother Church. In the words of the great Magnificat Antiphon of the Second Vespers of the feast:

O sacred banquet,
in which Christ is received,
the memory of his passion is renewed,
the mind is filled with grace,
and a pledge of future glory is given to us.
Alleluia!