

A Special Observance of the Feast of CORPUS CHRISTI

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Today's gospel lesson is taken from John 6, and comes in the aftermath of Jesus miraculous feeding of the 5,000.

- ❖ Seeing that Jesus had left, some of that crowd have traveled around the Sea of Galilee to find him.
- ❖ When they do, Jesus immediately points out that they haven't come looking for *him*, but for *bread*.

He explains to the crowd how He himself is the greater gift, the living bread which came down from heaven.

- ❖ Unfortunately this isn't well-received, and the people begin arguing with Jesus from the start.
- ❖ When Jesus emphasizes that it's only his own flesh and blood that will bring them eternal life, most end up rejecting him and leaving.

We see this over and over again in the gospels; that Jesus doesn't respond to our desires or demands, but our needs.

- ❖ Samaritan woman at well wanted water; Jesus offers living water
- ❖ Woman with the hemorrhage, physical healing; Jesus wants total emotional, communal restoration

There are numerous other examples of people receiving more than they'd expected, but also others like the crowds looking for bread; those that are offered more and reject it.

- ❖ There's the rich young ruler, who declines Jesus' invitation to follow when he discovers that he'll have to leave all his stuff behind.
- ❖ That's actually the exact problem that the Israelites run into in the Exodus.

June 18, 2017

The people had cried out to God to free them from bondage, and that's exactly what he does.

- ❖ Removed all other obstacles – oppression, bondage, poverty/want, visibly present among them, miraculously sustaining them (not just with manna)
- ❖ But what being alone with the LORD *revealed* was that they were still in bondage to a material craving
- ❖ Had brought the people out of bondage, now had to bring the bondage out of the people

In Jesus, God has again come free us from bondage for the purpose of knowing him, now working from the inside out.

- ❖ But we have to train our hearts to recognize that Jesus is what they really need.
- ❖ And that starts with how we come to Mass.

In the Eucharist we don't just encounter Jesus, we *receive* Him in the most profound way possible for us on earth; and that's so important to understand.

- ❖ Is God present when we pray? Yes.
- ❖ Is God present in all of our interactions? Yes.
- ❖ God is always with us, BUT the only place where the actual person of Jesus can literally *become a part of us* is in Holy Communion.

If we're not at Mass, that doesn't happen – period.

- ❖ You could stay home and have the deepest, most intimate experience of prayer you've ever had – and it won't compare to what's happening in your soul when you're at Mass.
- ❖ It doesn't matter if you're distracted or would rather be somewhere else because Jesus is here and is pouring out his love on you.
- ❖ That said, whenever we do end up just passively watching, we rob ourselves of a precious opportunity to experience the Presence of the Lord.
- ❖

June 18, 2017

So what can we do to avoid that?

1. MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS - actively make our own little Exodus to minimize distractions.

FAST – body has a profound effect on soul

- ❖ Body's hunger informs soul's
- ❖ Practically, forces you to think about Mass before you arrive and order your day around it to a certain extent

Not just food, either

- ❖ As much as possible, fast from superficial things
 - media; email, internet, TV, newspaper
 - MINE – a thousand little things that I think I can get done
 - But rushing around before Mass doesn't help me focus, quiet
 - Not necessarily superficial, but other concerns
- ❖ Create some space for silence – maybe on the drive to Mass

2. ACTIVE PREPARATION – Made not just spiritually possible, but practically

- ❖ Another great thing about fasting is that it creates space
- ❖ In this case, fasting from various superficial things may create the space to read the lessons, allow you to get to the church early to pray beforehand

Spiritually, fasting helps you to be aware of what's going on in your heart

- ❖ Examining your conscience, thinking of what in particular you need to ask forgiveness for
- ❖ Recognize things that get in the way of love; fear, anger, negativity, criticism, bitterness, narcissism
- ❖ Setting aside other concerns, or praying about them specifically and offering them up as a special intention

June 18, 2017

3. KEEP ENGAGING THROUGHOUT MASS

- ❖ Pay attention to your attention
- ❖ Read along, rest if something moves you
- ❖ Pray along with intercessions, Eucharistic Prayer
- ❖ Receive with expectation, adore, and offer thanksgiving after.

Doing all that doesn't ensure that we'll have a mystical or emotional experience every time we come to Mass,

- ❖ Though if we engage that way we'll be surprised at how often that happens.
- ❖ But that shouldn't be our goal anyway – when we do that we've come looking for bread instead of Jesus.

True worship is not about getting what we want.

- ❖ Worship is about receiving God as he truly is and say with sincerity, "Speak, Lord; your servant is listening,"
- ❖ And to open our hearts to whatever he offers with the living faith that it's better than anything we could ask for or imagine.