

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISHES OF



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14 June 2020

Feast of Corpus Christi – Solemnity of the Body & Blood of Christ

Dear Parishioners,

The goal of the Christian life is communion with God, to be in the presence of God... forever.

In God's wisdom, he has given us two means to achieve this goal. One of the means is internal to us, one is external, but the two are always to be joined together: faith and the sacraments.

These two "link" me to Christ, in the phrase of St. Thomas Aquinas. More specifically, faith and the sacraments link us—join us, bind us, touch us—with the power of Christ's Passion.

Faith is a contact with Christ, and so a contact with our redemption won by Christ.

It is God's action in the soul, which we call grace, which both causes faith to begin in one's soul for the first time as an entirely new thing in the unbeliever, and causes faith to abide in the believer.

God works the justification of man like the sun produces light in the air (the analogy is also St. Thomas's). Grace, when like the rays of sun, strikes the believer is as efficacious as when its rays strike for the first time the unbeliever because in both the proper effect of grace is to produce faith.

And faith opens the door to charity and hope, and plants the seed of life lived in communion with God.

But a man, a woman, a child is more than just a mind...and there is more to life than what is lived in our minds.

We are physical beings as well, and we need the helps of the realities of the external world around us. A life lived only in our minds is only a partial life. And we crave life to the full, a full and rich and abundant life.

Our minds must stretch to reach out to the world around us, and to others too, who are part of that world, as we are to them.

The sacraments are grafted onto our faith, so to speak; faith being the broader, more primordial and universal—but internal—reality, and the sacraments being the external reality. Our faith is in need of help, just as our minds are in need of assistance and support from the material world.

The sacraments are part of the mercy of God, who understands our human nature as only a creator can... our unity of body and soul; our weakness in our servitude to material things since the Fall and

the advent of original sin which is remedied by the spiritual power inside the material thing; and our need to use external things to work out our salvation.

So the sacraments and faith work together for our justification in God's loving plan for us, a plan which draws us to him and binds us to him.

Sacraments use external things as signs of a supernatural reality. They are efficacious signs, producing what they signify.

In the realm of the sacraments, external things become more than mere symbolic "markers" of some event, they re-present that event again and again, aligning the past event with the present experience and stretch forward to a future hope.

To use an example.

We are grateful to those who have fought to preserve the life, society and civilisation we enjoy. We pay homage to the men and women who have laid down their lives that we might live in freedom. Sadly, we acknowledge that this has often led to conflicts and wars.

We erect monuments to those who have died for us.

In Ottawa, in the very centre of the city is the large war memorial to the unknown soldier. It is impossible to miss. There is a ceremonial guard on duty. And anyone visiting the city cannot pass by without noticing it.

It is a monument to the past, to the terrible struggle waged for our freedom in two world wars. It recalls the past when we experience it in the present; and it calls to mind our duty going forward to strive to hold dear those values which were so hard-fought for. It is a pledge of peace, in a way, that harmony can be safeguarded and human beings can work for the greater good. We must not forget the past as we strive to assure the future. The goal we strive for is hewn from the events of the past as we experience them in the present.

We see stone with our eyes but, through our internal senses (our memory), we understand that the stones speak.

We stand in the present, but, through our minds we gaze upon the past represented in the monument and make a pledge for the future. Our internal disposition is what makes sense of the external sign we gaze upon.

The sacraments are signs like a monument that rises before us.

They are monuments that draw together the past, the present and the future.

But stone is stone. A monument cannot resurrect the dead, nor can a monument effect the peace it pledges.

The sacraments are much more powerful signs, for they do not simply point to the events of the past, they actually effect their working in the present.

And the sacrament of sacraments is the Eucharist, by which we "touch" Christ in a sacramental representation of the power of Christ's Passion.

Common external things—bread and wine—are changed utterly into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity—the Real Presence.

It is by faith that this reality is perceived—our internal disposition. Our human eye alone cannot see and penetrate to the supernatural reality behind the sign.

Just as our memory (an internal act of the human mind) makes sense of the external monument to the unknown soldier, so faith (an internal act of the human soul) makes sense of the signs that we perceive in the sacraments.

Faith and the sacraments work together. Our internal disposition makes sense of the external things we perceive.

Through faith and the sacraments the power of Christ's Passion reaches to us for our justification.

In the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, we have the Real Presence of Christ, sacramentally made present again.

The past event is brought into the present upon the altar, and gives us at the same time a pledge of our ardent hope: to be present with him forever.

Fr. Philip Creurer

Pastor