**The Feast of Corpus Christi 2025**

One of the important lessons we learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic, was how closely related we are to each other – caring for oneself, also meant caring for others.

In today’s Gospel, *“Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them”;* but as the day wore on, he became aware that they were hungry - *“give them something to eat”*, he said. For Jesus, people were not merely souls to be saved, but men and women, and children too, with bodily and emotional needs. However, as he looked at the crowd, he recognised a deeper hunger – he understood their loneliness and confusion; he saw their hunger for love. Today’s Gospel passage reminds us that Christianity is not just a philosophy of life, or a code of conduct, but is principally an encounter with a person – Christianity is an encounter with Jesus Christ - or it is nothing at all! *(cf Benedict XV1, DCS; also, St Oscar Romero).* It is a relationship which nourishes the human spirit.

The Apostles, that day, must have been astounded as they watched Jesus provide, from five loaves and two fish, food for the thousands gathered around him. It was a day which they never forgot, but, it was only as time passed, that they understood the particular significance of that day, and the promise it embedded within it. The action of Jesus demonstrated his concern for the people there – in all probability that crowd was made up of very ordinary people, and in the minds of the scribes and pharisees, the priests and lawyers, they represented the hopeless.

When we understand Jesus’ deep concern for people, it becomes clear why, the promotion of human dignity and the protection of human life lie at the very heart of Catholicism – a concern not just for the unborn, but also for the poor, the immigrant, the hungry, the abused, the homeless, and those who suffer racial or sexual discrimination; indeed it includes all victims of injustice. Catholicism sees the human person as sacred! If we do not reverence others, and hold human life to be sacred, we can never truly reverence the Eucharist, or understand and accept it as “the Body of Christ”.

The phrase, “the Body of Christ” refers not only to the Eucharist, but also to the community which celebrates the Eucharist. Our parish community, for example, has a “thrown together” quality; we did not choose one another, nevertheless, here the old and the young, the long-time resident and newcomer, belong and are loved; here the married and the single, the broken and the different, belong and are loved; here the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, belong and are loved. No matter who we are, or where we come from, or whatever our background, here we all belong! *(cf Galatians 3:27-28).* We are “the body of Christ”. Our gathering for Sunday Mass proclaims that we belong to Christ, and that his Spirit resides in us, not only as individuals, but also in our community gathered – we are the body of Christ. We pray in the Eucharistic Prayer, “that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit” *(EP 11).*

These days, in our parish, and right across the Diocese, we are praying a novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the image of the Sacred Heart, we see all that is contained in Christianity; we see Jesus who pours out his love upon us, and loves us, not just in some general manner, such as how we love those who make up our wider family circle, but with a total love as though there is no one else in the world to love. As each of us receives the Eucharistic Host, his body and blood, his soul and divinity, he says, “I love you; I died for you; I now give myself totally to you.” The Eucharist is the loving heart of Jesus, aflame with love for all of humanity! This is a miracle greater and more amazing than the feeding of the five thousand.

In the Eucharist, Jesus does not give us a sacred “token”, of his love, but he gives us his very self. When we come forward to receive the Eucharistic Host we hear the words “The Body of Christ”. These words should always startle us. That body offered to us in the Eucharist is not something but someone! Receiving Holy Communion is a spiritual event in which we come into union, communion, with Our Lord, his spirit in my spirit, his soul in my soul, his heart in my heart. He gives us the totality of his life *(cf SC. 7).*

The Jesus, whom that crowd encountered, is the Jesus we encounter in the Mass. His love for us is so overwhelming, that he would have given us something greater, if there was something greater to give. But there is nothing greater than the Eucharist. The Body of Christ makes us the body of Christ!

*“Lord Jesus,*

*as we worship you in the Holy Eucharist,*

*and there encounter your loving heart,*

*may we also reverence you in the needy of the world.”* **Amen.**