

June 22 & 23, 2019
Most Holy Body and Blood

All Saints Parish, Syracuse
Fr. Fred Daley

Father Joe Donders, who spent many years ministering in Africa and who taught at Washington Theological Union, tells the story of coming out of the National Shrine in Washington, DC – you might have been there – a huge basilica that stands on a hill on the campus of Catholic University.

As he stepped outside, he noticed a group of tourists who just attended mass and received Communion, who were rushing to get their bus.

There was a blind man, who happened to be sitting in the same area of the Basilica as the tourists and who had received Communion with them and walked out of the church with them – tapping the pavement in front of him with his cane. He must have felt a bit lost in the strange place with the unknown crowd talking excitedly around, but not to him. They did not see him either...; though they were not blind, they were busy with themselves.

At one moment someone stepped on his cane, bending it – but didn't even stop, rushing to the bus. They left him alone, trying to straighten out his cane.

Sisters and brothers, they had all been to Holy Communion... together in Jesus, who said to *all of them*: "This is my body, ...this is my blood."

Yet outside the church – in everyday life – the reality got lost. 'The Body' did not seem to have formed. They were not in communion; they did not really form His Body.

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Sisters and brothers, this true story points out the two central components of our Catholic faith that we are invited to reflect about on this Feast of Corpus Christi, The Body of Christ.

First, as Catholics, we believe that at mass, during the Eucharistic Prayer – after the Sanctus – at the Words of Consecration, the simple gifts of bread and wine, that we all offer, are changed ... *transformed* into the Body and Blood of Christ:

Take – all of you and eat – this is my body!
Take – all of you and drink – this is my blood!

As Catholics, we embrace this mystery that Jesus is truly present in the form of bread and wine:

Do this in memory of me...

Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am in the midst of them.

The second component, intimately connected to the first, is that we're invited to reflect about on this Feast of Corpus Christi is that *every time* we receive the Body and Blood of Christ at mass, we are called... invited *to be transformed*, to become in a deeper, more authentic way... *The Body of Christ* as individuals; ... as community.

This is so powerfully demonstrated in today's familiar Gospel story: in the presence of Jesus, the tired disciples appearing to be indifferent to the vast crowd after the long retreat day...; and Jesus commanding the disciples to feed them; the "miracle" of sharing what they had, and inviting others to share also.

Sisters and brothers, *we have the potential to become the real presence of Jesus to one another and to the world.* We have the potential, as St. Teresa of Avila reminds us to become Jesus:

Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but
yours,
Yours are the eyes through which He
looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which He
walks to do good,
Yours are the hands with which He
blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, Yours are the
feet,
Yours are the eyes, You are His Body,
Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes through which He
looks
Compassion on this world,
Christ has no body now on earth
but yours.

I say *potential* because those tourists coming out of the National Shrine in Washington, most probably had been aware of the real presence of Jesus in the Communion Bread and Wine, but seem to have failed to be transformed into the Body of Christ, ... *to be* the real presence of Jesus outside the church and, ultimately, failed to see the blind man was the real presence of Jesus in their midst.

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Sisters and brothers, the bottom-line of our Catholic Christian Faith – that we profess every Sabbath – is that: no matter how much we believe in the real presence of Jesus at the altar table; no matter how many times we bow down, kneel, genuflect, pray and receive the real presence – The Body of Christ – in church... *if we fail to be transformed into the Body of Christ outside the church, if we fail to see the real presence of Jesus in every person outside the church, we have failed to be truly Catholic, ... we have failed to be truly Christian.*

We become a church - a community that is dead.

I'm sure that those tourists were in no way consciously mean or cruel to the blind man the steps of the Basilica, but were so wrapped up in themselves that they were blind... they *really didn't* see him! They were indifferent... . Pope Francis, since the first day of his election, has emphasized that one of the primary illnesses of our contemporary age is what he calls "the globalization of indifference."

On July 8, 2013, Pope Francis made his first trip outside Rome to the city of Salina on the Island of Lampedusa, the far southern border of Italy, where refugees from Africa and the Middle East arrive seeking asylum. Thousands of men, women and children crossing the sea in rickety, over-filled boats, trying to reach freedom and security...

I can't help but think of our sanctuary family, of Guy Guy floating in the Caribbean Sea... holding on to the capsized boat with one arm... and 4-month old Daniella with the other!

Looking out to the sea, in his Homily, Pope Francis said in part:

We live in a culture of comfort which makes us think only of ourselves makes us insensitive to the cries of other people makes us live in soap bubbles which however lovely our insubstantial they offer a fleeting and empty illusion which results in indifference to others indeed even leads to the globalization of indifference in this globalized world we have fallen into globalized indifference we have become used to the suffering of others it doesn't affect me it doesn't concern me it's none of my business.

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Sisters and brothers, reflecting on today's Feast of Corpus Christi, it strikes me that what makes our Parish so alive: a continually growing and diverse and inclusive community... in the midst of our struggles and failures and mistakes, is this that *we are a community that cares for each other!* Before mass God help those who hope for a moment of quiet prayer! While we try to play a little music to keep down the roar... people are talking and sharing with one another...; always attentive to aware whether there is anyone in our midst who might feel like that blind man – all alone. We are alert to whether there is anyone who or anything that we are *blind to*; that we are *indifferent to*; that *we don't see*. This is what gives this Parish life: flowing from our sense of community, we reach out and see the presence of Jesus locally and globally:

- in the Eastside food pantry,
- the monthly Oxford Inn meals,
- our Refugee Welcoming Ministry,
- sandwiches for the Assumption food pantry,
- Villanueva in Nicaragua
- Break Margins Africa
- And so much more ... just yesterday members of the Parish were marching in the Pride Parade!

To the extent that we receive the Body of Christ to become the Body of Christ we will continue to grow, ... our light will shine! Not without struggle, not without sacrifice, not without rejection by those who think our diversity and inclusiveness is heretical...

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I conclude with the words of the late Asian theologian, Father Tissa Balasuriya:

The Eucharist is spiritual food insofar as it leads to greater love, unity, communion among persons and groups. Today this requires love among persons and effective action for justice. The Eucharist must lead us to a response to the suffering of the masses – often caused by people who take a prominent part in the Eucharist. Unless there is the two-fold dimension of personal love and social action the Eucharist can be a sacrilege!