

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Hunger for the eucharist shows strong Catholic spirituality. During the pandemic many Catholics have suffered loneliness from the sacraments of the church. They had made the eucharist a regular part of their lives, and being without it has provoked feelings of loss and even anger. Beneath those feelings lies a success story: Catholics have figured out that the eucharist is the center of our lives. It is the source that impels us to serve others, and it is the summit of all our faithful activity. We do not celebrate the main weekly eucharist on a Thursday to commemorate the Last Supper. We celebrate it on Sunday, the Lord's Day, the day of the resurrection, because it is the risen Christ we encounter whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup.

The eucharist not only connects us to Christ; it forges bonds among us. St. Paul makes both points in today's brief second reading. "The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."

Bishop James Johnston two weeks ago published "Keeping the Lord's Day: [A] Pastoral Letter on the Importance of Sunday in the Life of Every Christian Disciple." Bottom line, the letter explains why our bishop wants Catholic Schools to cease some Sunday activities, such as certain meetings and sporting events. But he sets this up with a beautiful reflection on the Lord's Day, challenging all of us to keep our Sunday holy.

Sunday is not just about refraining from other activities, but connecting with important people. Bishop Johnston writes, "Sunday is a gift from God for rest and relationship." He cites Pope Saint John Paul II, "the faithful are called to rest not only as God rested, but to rest in the Lord... intimate as a child and friendly as a spouse."

The bishop writes, "Many parents have shared with me that they have come to learn and discover more about their children during this time [of pandemic]. I have heard of parents going for walks and having substantial talks with their children; things that had been crowded out before. Life slowed down, and the hyper-activity within many families changed.... Families were presented with a choice: to lose themselves with distractions and isolating activities, or become... present to each other in a new way."

"God wants us to have the blessing of setting aside our busy-ness and noticing—noticing the beauty of Creation and the One who brought it into being, noticing Jesus, who gave himself for us and our salvation, and noticing the important people he has placed in our lives, so that we can be renewed by our friendships and deepen them...." "Importantly, Sunday is also set aside for noticing those who are often overlooked—the poor..., to perform acts of charity, works of mercy, or some other Christian apostolate."

The bishop concludes with two bits of practical advice: "Eliminate the competition." Don't do things that get in the way of honoring Sunday. And "Be more intentional about how you celebrate Sunday, beginning with Sunday mass." As we celebrate Corpus Christi this year, we recall the centrality of the eucharist in our lives, and we recommit ourselves to keeping Sunday holy.

Sunday, June 14, 2020