

## Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

**Our diocese reaches a milestone today in the long, difficult Covid-19 pandemic. In March 2020, Bishop Johnston joined many other bishops around the world who suspended the public celebration of Mass in the interests of health and safety. He also dispensed us from the obligation to participate at Mass on Sunday. Initially he permitted no more than ten people in church at a time. Gradually these numbers increased but with many restrictions, including online registration to make sure you had a seat and to help us contact you in case of an outbreak. Last month the City of Kansas City rescinded its legislation pertaining to masks and social distancing. Now the bishop has restored the obligation—the joyful obligation—to participate at Mass.**

**When people talked about what they missed most during the worst part of the pandemic, frequently it was family. Some were unable to celebrate significant events such as weddings and funerals the way they should be done. And for many Catholics what they missed most was coming to communion. Many watched services online, but that's not the same as participating here, and participating here is best when receiving communion.**

**We offered Mass every day during this time, and though the cathedral could fit everyone in here on Sundays, some Catholic churches could not; they're smaller than we are. In theory, smaller numbers of Catholics could have gone to church on weekdays instead, but we like to observe Sunday, the Lord's Day, the day of the resurrection, the day that identifies us as followers of Christ. Many honored Sunday by praying at home, but they felt that something was missing.**

**What was missing is what Jesus proclaimed so simply and powerfully in today's gospel: "This is my body.... This is my blood." On the night before he died, his disciples asked where they should prepare the Passover. He had a specific place in mind, along with a specific host. Jesus and the disciples then assembled at "a large upper room furnished and ready." Passover had always helped people participate in Israel's liberation from slavery. The followers of Jesus were about to experience a new liberation from the slavery of sin. Jesus would become their passover lamb, put to death to give them life.**

**We've all benefited from people who sacrificed themselves so that we could live, starting with our parents. Everyone here has sacrificed for the sake of others and for the sake of God. You do it out of love, as Jesus did. Love imposes certain obligations, which people joyfully accept. Whether you sacrifice for your spouse, for your country, or for God, you give with joy when you give in love.**

**The eucharistic desert that many experienced during the pandemic was not a mere symbol of absence. It was a symbol of global sacrifice: health care workers who risked their lives to save others, researchers who toiled long hours to provide a vaccine, underpaid front line workers who kept society moving, friends who refrained from travel to stem the spread of the virus, and Catholics who stayed home from church out of love for their neighbor. Now we thank God that we can express our love in the best of ways: joyfully sacrificing our time to come here and celebrate the eucharist together. This holy communion strengthens us to love even more as Christ loved—body and blood.**

Sunday, June 6, 2021