



Immaculate Conception
Church

Homily for Feast of Corpus Christi

Reverend Ronald E. Brassard - Fortieth Anniversary of Priesthood

It happened exactly three weeks ago today...almost to the minute. It was our annual graduation mass. As is our custom, the 11:30 AM Mass on the first Sunday of June is put aside so that we might pray together for those who will graduate from our school in a few days. It was 11:25 (or just after it) and there was a flutter of activity. The graduates were dutifully lined up at the great doors and I was, as usual, moving quickly through the lobby making sure that everyone knew what was going to happen in but a few moments when we began the celebration.

It was nearly time to begin when Father Peter Mongeon came racing into the lobby trying to make sure that his chasuble was on correctly. Seeing him, I exclaimed..."Peter, I didn't know you were going to be here!" Immediately I put the wheels in motion to create a proper place for Fr. Peter to be seated in the sanctuary. But he assured me that it wasn't necessary. He knew he was cutting it close and didn't want any fuss to be made.

I must admit though that I was a bit puzzled and so I said to him: "Peter, who do you know in the graduating class?" "Know?" he responded. "I don't know anyone in the graduating class." "Then why are you here for this mass?" I asked. "I'm here for your 40th Anniversary Mass," he said. "Peter," I exclaimed, "that mass isn't for three more weeks." He was shocked and he disappeared as quickly as he had arrived. But all I could think about was "How exciting! Seems like they can't wait for my Fortieth Anniversary Celebration to arrive."

And so energized by what seemed to be this excitement I decided that I would spend part of the afternoon taking my first glance at the readings for today. Imagine my shock when the first words of the reading were: "Remember how the Lord your God led you for forty years..." Wow, wasn't I stunned? Even God was getting into the act.

But then it hit me. I was missing the point. This mass, this celebration, isn't about me and it certainly isn't about my life... it is not even about the last forty years of my life. This is about all of us. This is about the profound truth that God leads each and every one of us throughout our lives.

The words of Moses are profound. Moses begs his listeners to remember that God brings us to freedom, God guides us through the dark moments of life and God feeds us when the hunger of our hearts finds us struggling to get from one moment to the next.

And this care and food that Moses promises the people of Israel is brought to an entirely new level when Jesus promises us that He is the food for our journey. Jesus Christ is not the food of the Old Testament. Rather Jesus Christ is the new living bread come down from heaven.

And in this gift of the Eucharist, this new living bread, God not only feeds us but God makes us one with each other. Many though we are, we become one when we share the common food of faith...the bread and wine, the Body and Blood of the Lord.

I have been blessed for forty years to serve all of you in the gift of the Eucharist. But what we celebrate today is not what I have done. What we celebrate is what God continues to do at this Mass and at every Mass. We celebrate the gift of the Church made strong by the gift of the Eucharist. And we are that Church. We are made strong.

Many years ago it was the custom of the Church to sing an extended reflection before the Gospel on special feasts. This extended reflection was called the sequence. This day, this Feast of the Body and Blood of the Lord, was one of those feasts during which we sang the sequence. The sequence for this feast ends with these words:

O thou, the wisest, mightiest, best,

Our present food, our future rest,

Come, make us each thy chosen guest.

My prayer of gratitude for these forty years is that Christ might come to us this day and become our chosen guest. May we welcome not only He who is the wisest, the mightiest and the best, but also welcome each other. For in Christ we discover all that we are. In Christ we learn our destiny. In Christ we become one. In Christ we become his Church. In Christ we become God's presence in the world today.

40