Homily for Corpus Christi

Sunday June 2, 2013

In this Year of Faith, the Church – that is, the Body of Christ – celebrates an annual Solemn Holy Day which reminds us of who we are and to whom we belong. This feast was established in response to confusion and misunderstanding about the meaning of the Mass. Almost a thousand years ago, a movement began within the Church to highlight and intensify devotion to the consecrated species of the Body and Blood of Christ. St. Juliana, a Belgian nun petitioned the Pope to establish an annual Feast on the Thursday following Holy Trinity Sunday – a grand and glorious celebration of Mass in honor of our Lord’s true presence in the Most Holy Eucharist. Following this Mass, a procession of the Eucharist, enthroned within a Monstrance, would take place outside the Church building as people followed the Lord throughout the town. For centuries this beautiful devotion inspired countless men, women, and children. As processions moved from one altar to the next, the priest would bless the congregation with the Monstrance, and people experienced many blessings – especially the sick.

Thus over the expanse of time music was written for the celebration of Corpus Christi Thursday. The Dominican priest St. Thomas Aquinas composed magnificent music for today’s celebration – such as Pange Lingua, Adoro Te Devote, Tantum ergo Sacramentum, and O Salutaris Hostia...
It’s important to remember that every Sunday the great Mystery of Christ’s Body and Blood comes to us at the Consecration. We believe that the Risen Lord’s true Presence enters into what was ordinary bread and wine. Whenever we receive Holy Communion, we must be properly disposed and we must truly believe that Christ is truly, really, and substantially present to us under the species of consecrated bread and wine.

Having said that, I must also go back to an even earlier time – the fourth and fifth centuries – when an African scholar was converted through the prayers of his mother – I am speaking of St. Augustine of Hippo and his devoted mother St. Monica. Augustine was blessed with enormous depth of understanding and inspiration about the mystery of Christ and His Body the Church. He realized that every time a Christian received Communion, a wondrous bond of love, grace, and healing took place. Augustine was fond of saying: “Christian! Receive who you are — the Body of Christ!”

We were made to become truly members of the Mystical Body of Christ. Our souls are mystical tabernacles that enshrine the living Lord Jesus.

Not only that, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We cannot speak of Christ without speaking of His Bride and Body, the Church. Just as a man and woman in marriage consummate their union of love, every member of Christ’s Body the Church is also called to enter into an intimate union with Christ the Bridegroom.
Today it is fitting for us to have our second annual Health Awareness Fair on the Feast of Corpus Christi. God desires that his chosen and beloved children find healing and strength from his Son Jesus, the Divine Physician. Think of how many times we hear about Jesus healing the sick and laying hands on those who need the grace of strength and peace. Jesus says that He has come to bring us abundant life. At Communion we say together as His Body: “Lord I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof; say only the word and I shall be healed.”

The Catholic Church has been serving the needs of the sick, dying, and the destitute for hundreds of years. We take the words of Christ in Matthew 25 very seriously: “I was hungry and You gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

We are indeed our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers. We were not made for isolation; we were made for communion with God and with each other. Our solidarity with all people is not an option – it’s a necessity. As I have said many times, each person is mad in the image and likeness of God. Jesus has taught us this truth so that we can always say: “God is the Father of all – and we are His family --families take care of each other”.

I want to thank my fellow members of St Matthew Conference of the St Vincent DePaul Society for organizing this Health Care
Awareness Fair today – may the healing love of Jesus come to all who seek the Savior’s touch… amen.