

2019 Corpus Christi

1. **A palliative nurse once recounted this moment to me.** A man was in his last hour of life, and repeatedly asked her, “isn’t there something more to life than dying alone?” He was not a Christian; she was. She was silent. **Death can be that long loneliness** that no man or woman can avoid. She didn’t know how to speak to his loneliness, and in a way, to her own, though she was a Christian. On this Feast of The Body and Blood of Christ, Jesus addresses not only our personal loneliness but that of all people with a sign. The Twelve tell him, “Send the people away...for **we are in a lonely place here.**”

2. **But our Lord is not satisfied with the Apostles’ solution,** “Send them away...,” let them find their own food and lodging. Today, our solution to loneliness, to homelessness, echoes what is uppermost in the Apostles’ minds: We give our homeless food and shelter. But does that satisfy their loneliness, the desperation that led them to wander the desert of the street? **Jesus reading the hearts of all people, offers a solution:** And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were satisfied.” **A divine and human solution!**

3. **Eucharist Prayer 1 which we will use today,** repeats the same solution: “On the day before he was to suffer, he took bread in his holy and venerable hands, and with eyes raised to heaven to you, O God, his Almighty Father, giving you thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his

disciples, saying, “Take this all of you and eat of it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you.”” **Do these actions find an echo in your heart?** The rising tide of loneliness is not satisfied with food and shelter. **We have some of the best elder care in the world, yet so many of our elderly choose to end their unbearable loneliness by suicide.**

4. **So we need to sit with Jesus’ solution a little.**

“**Get them to sit down!**” Interesting! When we are lonely interiorly we are restless. We compensate with overwork, with distraction or we isolate ourselves. Jesus says, “Sit down...,” quieten your heart. Pray.

Then “He took the five loaves and two fish” He took what they had, the little they had. We need to give him the little or nothing we have, our loneliness, our depression, our failures. **He asks for it!**

Next, “He raised his eyes to heaven.” Meaning? He acknowledges where the gift comes from; he speaks with his Father in the silence of his heart. His prayer precedes his blessing and breaking. Often our personal prayer precedes our day, but **when we encounter suffering or our mistakes, our prayer falters,** we falter. “God has left me!” Nope. You are looking at yourself again! Raise your eyes to heaven! **Sometimes we even doom ourselves by our past failures.**

Then, “he said the blessing over them.” Luke uses the word *eucharisteo*, meaning **to give thanks**, for blessing, in order to point us forward to the greater miracle of the Eucharist. **Jesus gives thanks to his Father.** Why? Because “God would have

given us something greater if he had something greater than himself!" (St. John Vianney, DOCAT, 207). **No wonder we thank!**

Only then does he break the bread. Loneliness breaks us, suffering breaks us, relationships break us. They do so, only if we forget the preceding actions of giving what we have to God, raising our eyes and giving thanks, in anticipation of the Father's love. Otherwise they will not break us! So he "hands them over to his disciples to distribute among the crowd." Much of our unhappiness in life lies in seeking how much we can get out of life. But the true discernment of life's purpose emerges when we ask "for whom shall I live, to whom shall I give?" **Life is given for giving, even if broken!**

5. So we have today, on this great feast of Corpus Christi, these five distinct actions that cut into our personal loneliness and the collective loneliness we see around us: raising our eyes, taking, blessing, breaking and giving. The highest form of loving and living and giving: the Mass! As these actions seep into our thoughts and desires and decisions, **life is transformed, as when a desert gives way to vegetation.** The Eucharist is not merely the presence of the Body and Blood of Christ. It is the sacred representation of his Sacrifice on the Cross. So also with us. When these sacred actions are woven into the tissue of our being, **they make a solemn and public proclamation about our lives.** "Something new and wonderful is at work in that person's life," people say. St. Paul puts it simply, "every time you eat this bread and drink this cup you are proclaiming his death." Mother Teresa would say, "We

must not separate our lives from the Eucharist; the moment we do, something shatters."

6. Loneliness has to do with fragmentation! The Eucharist has to do with ingathering and sacrifice and presence. His ingathering, his sacrifice, his presence. Life is more than simply waiting for death. **Life is for raising, taking, blessing, breaking, and giving. A divine rhythm. Life is living for God as Jesus did.**

Today after Mass we shall expose the Blessed Sacrament on the altar. Exposition will last until after Vespers today. Come to him and learn and let your life be a recognition of God's triumph, like Abraham's acknowledgement of Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine, after his defeat of the Amalekites!