

Corpus Christi “It is Time for A Revival”

Bishop Frank Schuster

These past several years have been a roller coaster. Last year at this time, we thought that the Covid coaster was finally over. As the days got longer last year, masks started flying off people’s faces, beaches and campgrounds filled up, and more and more parishioners started to come back to church. There was great optimism going into last summer. Here at St. Vincent de Paul we finally brought back all our mass times, tossed away a lot of the restrictions that were in place, as I was welcomed as your new pastor in Federal Way. And then, the unthinkable happened, Covid came raging back. They called it “Delta”, and soon many of the restrictions that were lifted started to come back. I found myself back in the ICU’s giving last rites to Covid patients and we were having more funerals in our parish as well. We were faced with the dilemma of how do we bring our ministries back safely? And then there was Omicron later that fall, making matters worse. The very name Omicron sounded like the archvillain of a bad science fiction movie, and it was not very entertaining.

Now, it feels like we are back to where we were last year toward the beginning of summer. It feels like we are getting back to normal. But what does that word even mean these days, especially for our young people, many of whom have no idea what the older generation means when we speak of “normal”. We can’t go back to where we were before the pandemic. The world has forever changed, and not much for the better. There are wars being fought between nations and our culture in the United States is at war with itself. Many of our young people are losing hope, mental illness and the experience of homelessness are at a record high, and our government officials look the other way on important matters regarding public safety.

What is true of our culture is true of humanity from the beginning of time in that there is a brokenness inside of us that we cannot fix. There is a violence inside of each one of us that manifests itself in some of the really poor decisions we make from time to time as individuals to how nations treat other nations. As a country, we are observing Juneteenth on Monday. It is a day we remember and celebrate the emancipation of slaves in our country. It is also as time when we call to mind all the ways we continue to marginalize people to this very day. We call this violence inside of us original sin. And as we grow older, we see the effects of it all around us and inside us, and we eventually realize the truth that we cannot save ourselves. We can’t do it. We can’t. We need a savior. We need Jesus. My friends, now more than ever, our world needs Jesus. What this means is: the world needs you.

In the waters of baptism, we are configured to Christ, and welcomed into his Body the Church. In the sacrament of confirmation, we are strengthened by the gift of the Holy Spirit. You heard me correctly, confirmation is a gift freely given to us so to strengthen us with the Holy Spirit for the world in which we live in. We are then continually fed with the Eucharist, which is the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus. At the last supper, Jesus gave us his body and blood as true food and true drink. The insight here is, just as the body needs food to sustain life, so does the soul. The soul needs food to stay alive as well. That is the Holy Eucharist.

By the way, it is interesting that in American culture, the sacrament of confirmation has been seen as the sacrament that completes the sacraments of initiation into the Catholic Church. And indeed, for those who were baptized as infants, received Holy Communion as a child and then confirmed later in life, it is understandable that confirmation is seen in this way. However, for most of the world, the sacrament of confirmation is given before a Christian receives the Holy Eucharist for the first time. Even in our culture, if you attend Easter Vigil, you will see those who are entering the Church receiving their sacraments of initiation in the proper order, baptism, confirmation, and then Holy Communion.

The insight here is important because, baptism washes away the dominion original sin has over us by welcoming us into the life of God, confirmation strengthens us with the gift of the Holy Spirit so to help us live and give witness in a world dominated by the power of sin, and the Eucharist sustains us on a weekly, and for some of us, on a daily basis. My friends, the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life and is properly understood as completing the sacraments of initiation. Like I said, Jesus is fully present and offered to us in the Holy Eucharist, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity under the appearance of bread and wine. We believe this because Jesus said so when he gave us the Eucharist at the last supper. It may come as a surprise to some people, but we Catholics simply take Jesus for his word. Just as the body needs nourishment to survive, so does the soul.

This weekend, as Church, we celebrate Corpus Christi, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. It is a weekend when we celebrate the depths of how much Jesus loves us. When I was in seminary, one of my professors would ask the class a simple question. If you love someone, this means you want to be close to them, correct? He would then conclude with the insight: consider that Jesus Christ loves you so much that he wants to be as close to you as food and drink. That is an amazing insight. Jesus loves us so much that he wants to be as close to us as food and drink. That is the Eucharist. And when we receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, and if mom is correct in that we are what we eat. What follows is, we are to become like Christ to the world. We are to be Christ, to be the Body of Christ, outside these doors to all we meet. We are called to spread the fragrance of Christ into our homes and into our streets. We need to become Good News to all we meet, especially the poor and the marginalized, in a world all too often burdened by bad news.

That is what the world needs right now. For those who don't know, the Catholic Church in the United State is beginning a Eucharistic revival in our country for this basic reason. It will continue for several years and will include a national Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis the summer of 2024. I intend to be there. I hope you might consider that as well. A Eucharistic revival in our country is a good idea because, we all know at a very deep level how broken our world can be at times. We all know that it is a brokenness we cannot fix by ourselves. We need a savior. We need Jesus. What this means is, the world needs you. The world needs us to receive the Body of Christ as often as we can, every week, for some of us that means every day, so to be Christ to a world so desperately hungry for his love.