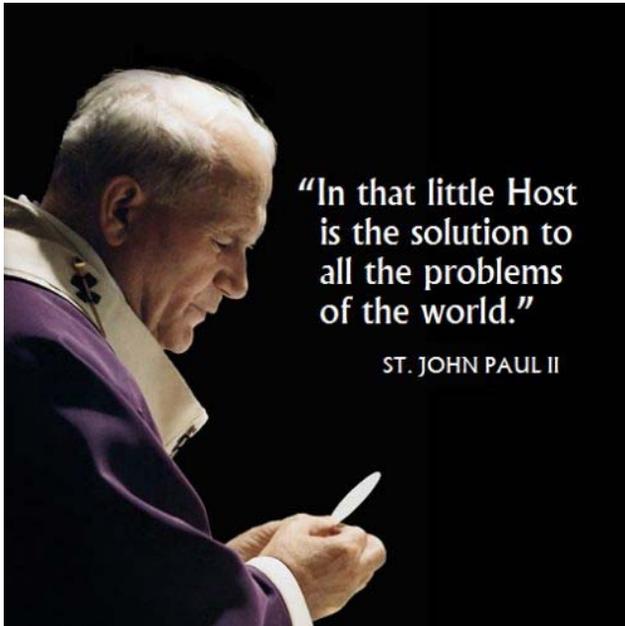


Dear Brothers and Sisters



"Do this in memory of me....."

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

As a child I loved this Feast. On Corpus Christi, as we called it, all the Catholic schools would walk in procession through the center of the city. Stores would close, traffic would stop, the pubs would empty, and hundreds of people, Catholic and non-catholic, would line roads to watch the procession with the Blessed Sacrament pass by, accompanied by thousands of school children and marching bands.

The procession would end in the castle grounds, where the Archbishop would celebrate Mass for the thousands gathered on the green grass.

As a small boy this was a great thrill. Not necessarily because of any devotion I had, but because we got the day off school. But thinking back I marvel at what this feast meant for the people and the city I grew up in. We Catholics were a minority, but this was the one day in the year when we could wear our faith on our sleeve. And everybody, it seemed, no matter what their denomination, what their religious preference, came out in support of this.

Perhaps that was because there is a truth in what we acknowledge and celebrate on this Solemnity that speaks to the human heart, the human soul.

This Feast, which gained popularity in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, in the face of the Protestant Reformation, speaks of a very specific truth. The Sacrament we celebrate is not a symbol, a mere allegory, or an image of something else.

The Eucharistic we celebrate every Sunday was not initiated by Jesus at the Last Supper as a sentimental farewell to his disciples. Jesus did something much greater than that. The Sacrament we have is what it actually says it is: The Body and Blood of Christ. Jesus fulfilled in his own flesh what God had promised to humanity.

This Sacrament is the fulfillment of all the promises God made to our forefathers.

The bread of slavery, the unleavened bread in the Old Testament, was a memorial of escaping the slavery of Egypt. Likewise, the cup of wine made present the Promised Land; where, unlike slaves, only those who were free could drink wine.

The bread of poverty, the cup of salvation.

All of this is fulfilled for us in Jesus Christ himself. Sent by the Father, he breaks every event of death, every experience of darkness, of Egypt, of slavery in our lives. His own life, poured out for us, allows us to drink from the chalice, to experience the true freedom of heaven, beginning even here on earth.

May all of us experience this truth as we celebrate this Solemnity today.

Fr. Sean