

On this Father's Day (weekend) I extend a happy Father's Day to all of you who fathers and grandfathers.

And in honor of Father's day, a little story.

A six year-old boy was behaving badly one evening when his father had enough
And sent him to bed.

Five minutes in the bedroom and the boy shouts out:

"Dad..." "What?" "Can I have a glass of water?"

"No, you're being punished," came the reply.

Five minutes pass...

"Daaad..." "What?" "Can I please have a glass of water?"

"No" replied the dad, "and if you ask again, I'm gonna spank you"

Ten minutes pass, "Daaaaaad..." "What?"

"When you come in to spank me, will you bring me a glass of water?"

And so, once again, congratulations to all the fathers with us today.

When I was pastor at Sacred Heart in Jeffersonville we had a coffee cup
that said: "Ask Me Why I'm Catholic"

In the office we sometimes joked that on any given day,

depending on what was happening in the Church

we might ask ourselves that very question.

However, there is a part of every day that I know my answer...

Today's Feast, the Body and Blood of Christ, celebrates that answer.

I am Catholic...not simply because I was fortunate to be born into the faith
(although that is a blessing).

I am Catholic...not only because it was the faith of my family

for as far back as I can remember (although having been lifted up

time and time again by the witness of my parents and grandparents

and many of my aunts and uncles).

And I am not Catholic because I have been brainwashed by a Church that
in some (perhaps many) instances has abused its birth rite

for the sake of power and corruption and yes at times even violence.

I am not Catholic for any of those reasons.

Ask me why I am Catholic and I'll tell you plain and simple.
I'm Catholic because of the Eucharist.

I'm Catholic because gathering around the altar is what Christians
have been doing from the very beginning of the Church.
My friends, we might get some things wrong in the Catholic Church...
And Lord knows we struggle to effectively portray Christ's message
of love and peace and forgiveness and hope.
But when it comes to what we do around this table,
for 2000 years we have gotten it right.

From the very beginning of the Church
after the Pentecost event that we celebrated two weeks ago
the Eucharist was central to the early believers
even before they thought of themselves as a Church.
While they were still clinging to their Jewish roots,
still going up to the temple for the Sabbath Services,
they would then turn around and gather on the next day—
as St. Justin Martry said,
in the 2nd century the day they called the day of the sun,
and they would share in the Eucharist.

From the very beginning of our Church, it was clear
that the early followers of Jesus knew they had something special.

Think about the words of St. Paul today:
When we take part in the Eucharist we are taking part
in the life and death and resurrection of Christ.
We not only receive his body...we become his body.

My friends, this Eucharist is a gift...a 2000 year-old life-giving,
body-nourishing, communion-building and faith-sustaining gift.
Ask me why I'm Catholic and I'll tell you it's the Eucharist.

I'm often amazed that the Catholic Church gets the criticism
that we aren't a "Bible believing" Church.
Our entire Mass is taken from the Bible from the first prayer of the trinity:
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
(given to us in Matthew 28)
Through the reading of the Scriptures (in which if you were to come to
every daily and Sunday Mass for 3 years—

you would hear about 80% of the Bible).
Through the shouts of Holy Holy Holy—
found in Isaiah 6 as well as in Revelation 4
The words of the Eucharistic prayer taken directly from Paul's writings
as well as those Eucharistic narratives
found in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
“Lord I am not worthy to receive you under my roof,
but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”
It might be a little awkward to say...
but it's taken from the Bible in Matthew chapter 8.
All the way to the Trinitarian blessing that sends us forth...
Our Mass is filled with the Bible.

I've been reading a series of books recently called Surprised by Truth.
There are three volumes of it now.
They are stories of people who have converted to the Catholic faith—
or fallen away Catholic who return to the faith—
And almost all of them talk about the Eucharist as what brought them back.
I understand that...It's why I am Catholic today.
And they become Catholic because when they begin to study our faith...
really study it...
they find out how much of our Eucharist comes from the Bible.
And they found out it has been that ways since Jesus ascended into heaven.

But here's the catch...

I think we sometimes don't realize what we have.
I think sometimes we take for granted the profound nature of the gift.

In one of the surprised by truth accounts, the author said something to the effect:
“I was taught throughout my life that Catholic ritual was
the following of human traditions but not truly worship of God.
And so I wanted to do my own research
and so I looked at the liturgy of the early Church
But as I began my studies of the early Church fathers
I discovered that early worship in the Church was much closer to what they did
then what I was doing each week.”

Perhaps for many of us the Eucharist has become routine.

Coming here week after week, we forget what a gift this Jesus is.
Remember the story of the Israelites in the desert...

God gave them bread from heaven, manna, the food that would sustain them.

But they got tired of it and began to complain.
Have we, like they, grown tired of the Eucharist...
same old words...same old songs...?

Perhaps we would do well to listen to the words of St. Cyril of Alexandria,
written in the 5th century:

“Come then, let us hasten to this mystical supper.

Today Christ receives us as his guests.

Today Christ waits upon us.

This day, God, the word made flesh entertains us.

Wisdom, who has built a house, distributes his body as her bread
and gives us his blood as wine to drink.

Life itself is bestowed upon us mortals as food and drink.”

Every week we offer we offer 65 hours of Eucharistic Adoration

Maybe it would do you good to spend an extra hour
in the presence of Jesus then...

Notice I said an extra hour...

because you're already spending an hour with him right now...

In his Word...in this Assembly...in the sharing of the one bread and one cup.

Perhaps you have lost faith in all that...

Maybe you wonder if it is true...

I, for myself, don't doubt it for a minute.

You see, The Eucharist is why I'm Catholic.

Note to Reader: I did not include this in the homily but it is appropriate for an understanding of the history of the Eucharist. The parentheses at the end of each section are my addition. Fr. Tom

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church

1345 As early as the second century we have the witness of St. Justin Martyr for the basic lines of the order of the Eucharistic celebration. They have stayed the same until our own day for all the great liturgical families. St. Justin wrote to the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161) around the year 155, explaining what Christians did:

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. (*Going to Church*)

The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. (*Readings*)

When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things. (*Homily*)

Then we all rise together and offer prayers* for ourselves . . . and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation. (*Petitions*)

When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss. (*Sign of peace moved to before communion*)

Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren. (*Offertory Procession*)

He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks (in Greek: *eucharistian*) that we have been judged worthy of these gifts. (*Eucharistic Prayer*)

When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: 'Amen.' (*Great Amen*)

When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the "eucharisted" bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent.¹⁷¹ (*Holy Communion*)