

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish

Westville

Daily Reflections for the Octave of Corpus Christi



I am the Bread of Life

SUNDAY 14 JUNE

Solemnity of Corpus Christi

Scripture: *John 6: 51 - 59*

Reflection

“The Eucharist is the Source and summit of the Christian life.” *Lumen Gentium 11*. In the Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself. We believe in the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ which is contained in the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus made an offering and a sacrifice of himself as a perfect gift which was truly pleasing to the Father. Although we celebrate the institution of the Holy Eucharist on Holy Thursday, the Church wants to emphasize its importance by this special feast of *Corpus Christi*.

In the gospel Jesus declares: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” Here Jesus spoke about the Eucharist. When we eat his Body and drink his Blood we are in total union with him in our way of thinking and living. By partaking in Holy Communion, we acclaim with St. Paul, “I live, not I, but Christ lives in me.” Galatians 2:20.

In and through the Eucharist we are introduced into an ever-closer union with Christ, and with one another. The Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, teaches us the importance of community, the bond that results from this sacrifice. Christ is the Head and we are the Body, the members. Through the Eucharist we become one. That which unites us is our willingness to sacrifice our time and talents to God in our fellow members in Christ’s mystical Body. This is signified by our sharing in the same Bread and the same Cup. Holy Communion should strengthen our sense of unity and love. In Communion we share with Christ and with one another; we become one with his memory.

Practical Suggestion

Why is the Eucharist such a fulfilling meal? Once the public celebration of Mass resumes, go to Mass as often as possible.

Prayer:

“O Sacrament most holy! O Sacrament Divine! All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine!” (St. Thomas Aquinas). Strength me O Lord to live according to your way, to be an instrument of your peace and to love my enemies and pray for those who persecute me. Amen.

MONDAY 15 JUNE

Scripture

Matthew 5: 38 – 42

“I say this to you, offer the wicked man no resistance”

Reflection

There is always a way to get what we want. Some of us will go to any length to get what we want. In 1 Kings, Ahab king of Samaria, wanted a piece of land because it was convenient for him to have it. Through deceitfulness, he exploited another to satisfy his desire. But at what expense?

In today's Gospel Jesus gives us a very different way to handle our grievances: offer the other cheek and instead of exchanging violence for violence and, retaliating with might against might, Jesus tells us to behave differently.

Gentleness is perhaps one of the most difficult ways to deal with conflict and not always easy for us to accept. We need to step back and respond with gentleness rather than react with violence. When we choose to follow the way Jesus teaches and try to understand why he teaches us to offer the wicked man no resistance, we will understand that the world is for all of us and not just for me. By “offering the other cheek” we avert violent conflict. This is how we grow and become better people.

Our world is a very selfish place. This message of Jesus is most pertinent in our current situation. He wants us to “go the extra mile” for one another. When we take on this attitude of Jesus we begin to see the needs of people all around us and, in the process, we become the solution rather than waiting for someone else to help.

The way of Jesus is so very different to the ways of the world. This is what marks us out as Christians; that we choose to be different because we are followers of Jesus. We can change the world.

Practical Suggestion

Lockdown provides many opportunities to ‘walk the extra mile,’ not least of which is the assistance we can give to the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Westville Churches food-bank. Follow the way of Jesus. Choose gentleness rather than anger and violence.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you calls us to follow your ways and to offer ourselves in service to others. Help me in a spirit of gentleness to turn the other cheek, to go the extra mile and to offer the wicked no resistance. Amen.

TUESDAY 16 JUNE

Scripture: *Matthew 5: 43 - 48*

Reflection

Have you ever wondered what this world could be like if there was no crime and nobody found themselves in trouble and nobody ever needed our help with anything? It is a sad reality that crime is all around us, as well as conflict, disagreements, war and the ongoing mistreatment of people. We are told that there are more slaves in the world today than there was at the height of the slave trade in the nineteenth century. There are many, many who can do something about this dreadful situation but who choose not to. It would seem that we live in a world of no conscience. People steal from others regardless of whether they are rich or poor and often appear to get away with it. It happens so frequently that we think that if they can do it and get away with it, why can't I?

In today's Gospel Jesus raises the bar for his followers. He tells us not to be content with living the way others do. He calls us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. This, he says, is what makes us children of God! It is a radical call but we know that in asking us to do this, he gives us all the help, strength and guidance we need. Just because the world in which we live refuses to do this should not mean that we give up without even trying. There is a lot which seems to be beyond our ability but through prayer and our personal determination we can choose to do better and to be better. We could argue that we are not saints and use that as an excuse, but sainthood is what we are all called to! We must be open to change and conversion; to move from being like others, to being like Jesus. Any time is right for this repentance and renewal. Consider the repentant thief on the cross. The Lord promised him salvation because he asked for forgiveness. We are likewise capable of change, and in the process, we can inspire others to change their lives to follow the of Jesus.

The world needs the example of all of us Christians, just as it needs food for the hungry, liberty for the oppressed and freedom for those in slavery. Even our neighbours, colleagues at work and those in our circle of friends need our help and example so that attitudes can be changed and behaviour modified. When we live and love with a generous love towards others our world becomes a better place.

Practical Suggestion

Start the day everyday with this simple prayer below. Make it part of your daily prayer.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you call us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. Strengthen me this day to live the way you want me to. May I be an example to others by the way I choose to live. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE

Scripture

Matthew 6: 1 – 6, 16 – 18

Reflection

Jesus had obviously observed people make a great show of their religion through a public display of their prayers, almsgiving and fasting. Human nature hasn't changed very much since then. There are still people who want everybody to know how charitable they are. They make a public display of their donations and contributions to charity, a grand display of their prayers in public, and they want everybody to know when they are fasting.

Jesus tells his followers to go about their faith without any flamboyant displays. Genuine faith and generosity comes from the heart and always has love and goodness as its inspiration.

We last heard this Gospel on Ash Wednesday when we began our Lenten season of prayer, fasting, self-denial and renewal. It serves as a powerful reminder to us again so that we can question our own motivation for doing good, being prayerful and denying ourselves something for a greater good. We choose to do things not because we are obliged to but because we know them to be right and good. An outward display of religion has little value. When we act with love, care and compassion we find ourselves at peace with God and the world.

Catholics are familiar with the obligations of the Church: to fast and abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Fridays in Lent and Good Friday; to go to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. A mature faith finds us doing these not because we are obliged to but because they are an integral part of our faith and make perfect sense to us.

In the same way our Christian obligation to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and shelter the homeless must become a natural part of our lives as we imitate the love, mercy and compassion of our God. In yesterday's Gospel Jesus told us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. We were reminded that he is asking us to do more than what the world expects. This is what marks us out as his followers; not the outward display but our sincerity of heart revealed in our behaviour and lifestyle.

Practical Suggestion

Do you think that you are an example of our Christian faith to those around you by the way you choose to live your faith?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help me to be like you, humble and sincere. Strengthen the little faith that I have so that others may come to know you through the example of my life. Amen.

THURSDAY 18 JUNE

Scripture

Matthew 6: 7 - 15

Reflection

Today's scripture is situated in the middle of the passage we read yesterday. Jesus had been talking about those who attracted attention to themselves by making a public show of their almsgiving, prayers and fasting. On the subject of prayer he cautioned them not to "babble like the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard."

Prayer, according to Jesus, should be simple, sincere, and from the heart. We call this prayer he used "The Lord's Prayer" not just because it was given to us by him but because it was the way he prayed.

The problem is that we tend to race through this prayer because it is so familiar to us. It would be useful to take a little time to read these words and think about what Jesus is saying. Our own prayer should be the same.

Many of us struggle with personal prayer and we feel guilty because we seem to be asking God for things, almost all the time. That is perfectly okay! God wants us to ask. Jesus often asked his Father and we shouldn't be afraid to either. It is precisely for this reason that he tells us to address God as 'Father.' How wonderfully personal and intimate! That is precisely how personal prayer should be.

Today I would like to share with you a personal methodology for prayer, one that I have used since I was in High School. I hope it will be helpful.

Practical suggestion

Time: Make time during the day, 5 minutes is all you need. Let this be a set time, the same time, your time, every day.

Place: Find a suitable place, somewhere where you will be comfortable and undisturbed for this short time.

Focus: Use a crucifix and or a rosary to help you to focus. Place them on a table close to your prayer space. You may also use a candle and place your Bible in that place too, even if you don't use it – yet!

Prayer

Begin with the Sign of the Cross and in God's Holy Name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Open your heart to God: if it's in the morning pray 'Father I thank you for the gift of this new day and all that it holds for me.' Bring before God all the special people in your life, mentioning them by name, and if they have any specific needs, let him know. After your prayer for others, pray for yourself and your needs for the day. Finally conclude with the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary and Glory be, finishing once again with the Sign of the Cross.

FRIDAY 19 JUNE

Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Scripture: *Matthew 11: 25 - 30*

Reflection

The Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes and lawyers were learned, self-sufficient, self-made men who thought they could save themselves through good works only. They were educated and intelligent, acquainted with religious truths but they lacked humility! They believed that they did not need Jesus to teach them anything and made an outward show of religious rituals and practices. For this they would be judged harshly. Jesus had presented them with a wonderful opportunity to respond to his ministry but they rejected Him and his message of salvation. They were stubborn, proud, self-centered and hard of heart.

Jesus wants his followers to have a spirit of humility, almost a childlike spirit. "Happy the gentle, they shall have the earth for their heritage." The sick, the lepers, tax collectors, the lame and those rejected as sinners flocked to Jesus. They saw in him something that they could not see in their own religious leaders. Besides being welcoming and inviting, Jesus was down to earth, humble and compassionate. Those in need were able to see what the proud cannot: that the Father sent Jesus to reveal his love for us, his children. We must see this as well.

The religious leaders were complicit in forcing the ordinary people to obey the Roman imperial system. As the elite they secured wealth, status, privilege and power at the expense of the people. Ordinary folk suffered under a harsh religious system.

Jesus offers an invitation "Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest." Unlike their religious leaders he was prepared to take the hardships and suffering of the people upon himself. This same invitation is made to us "Come to me." The heart of Jesus invites us to come to him. When we do we find rest in him.

Practical Suggestion:

What is the Sacred Heart of Jesus offering you today in the midst of our personal fears, hardships and struggles? Come to him.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I come to you and present myself to you, just as I am. I place before you my hardships and struggles especially in these following areas of my life: *mention them*. Help me Lord so that I may find rest in you. Amen.

SATURDAY 20 JUNE

Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Scripture *Luke 2: 41 - 51*

Reflection

This passage from St Luke's Gospel is the only place where we are told a little about Jesus as a young boy. It is an account which every parent can identify with. It's that sinking feeling when you realise that your child isn't where you thought they were and your anxiety levels rise rapidly. Joseph and Mary found the young Jesus after three days of frantic searching. Jesus, on the other hand, seemed quite taken aback that they hadn't realised that he would be in the Temple.

It is remarkable that at twelve years of age, Jesus was able to engage with people who were much older and presumably well-read in the scriptures. His answers and understanding of the scriptures amazed them.

We are told that Jesus was obedient to His parents and returned home with them to Nazareth where he remained until he began his public ministry.

Jesus' parents had given Him a sound foundation in the Jewish faith and had instilled in him a love for God the Father. He would have been familiar with the writings of what we now call the Old Testament, because Joseph and Mary had introduced him to the scriptures. They taught Jesus how to pray from a very young age.

Remember that Jesus was like us in all things but sin (Hebrews 2:17). He relied on his parents to guide him, learning and growing in all aspects of life. Many of the parables that Jesus used during His ministry, would have come from stories he had learnt and experienced as a child at home.

Parents are given the wonderful gift of their children but this gift comes with the important responsibility to bring them up in the practise of the faith. Children grow in their knowledge and love for their faith from what they experience and are taught at home. This happens most effectively when parents set the example for their children by praying daily, reading stories from the Bible and attending Mass as a family. As the saying goes "faith is caught, not taught."

Practical Suggestion

What are you doing during lockdown to feed and nourish your faith and the faith of your children? Use the material the parish provides and plan to participate in the online Mass tomorrow as a family.

Prayer

Father, thank you for the precious gift of children. Give us wisdom, help and guidance in raising them to know you and love you. May we be good examples of faith to our children. Amen