

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. Each of today's readings speaks to us of the centrality of bread as the gift of nourishment we receive from the Father. In the Church, we regard the Eucharist as the "source and summit of our faith." The bread or manna which fortified the Jewish people as they were delivered from the snare of suffering and Egyptian slavery belies the reality that God always protects us, watches over us and satisfies our hunger and quenches our thirst. Moses replays the harsh experience of the people and exhorts them to remember the faithfulness of God. He offers a very significant insight that will be echoed by Jesus himself in the "Bread of Life" discourse. Moses says, "God fed you in the desert with manna, a food unknown to your fathers." This reflects that indeed only God can satisfy our deepest hunger and longing. The ultimate response to our human hunger came to us in the Incarnation, the indwelling of God among us in Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us in John's Gospel we hear proclaimed today: "This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever."

Further along in the Book of Deuteronomy, in Chapter 30 is a beautiful, prayerful reflection which can help us to meditate upon God's love and faithfulness and our response to it. "And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you this day, with all your heart and with all your soul; then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes, and have compassion upon you, and he will gather you again..."

In celebrating the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, the Church acknowledges that through the affect of the Eucharistic celebration, bread and wine become transformed into the **Real Presence**, the true Body and Blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Professor Brant Pitre, a professor at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, offers this cogent and understandable reflection on the **Real Presence**: "Our third key to the secret of the Last Supper is certainly not least: Jesus also saw the Eucharist he would institute as the new Bread of the Presence. This final image, though the least well known among the three, teaches us something extremely important. It shows us that Jesus not only saw the bread he would give to his disciples as a sign of *something* - the new Exodus, the Passover, or the miracle of the manna. He saw it as a sign of *someone*. Indeed, he saw it as his own *personal presence*. By means of this bread, the new Bread of the Presence, he gave the Twelve an expression of his love for them, for the people of Israel, and for 'the many' for whom he would die on the cross."

The reality of the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ has been made so powerfully manifest to me as I have seen the reactions of those who have received Holy Communion, most especially during these difficult times.

People have wept, as some did during our first public Sunday Mass this past weekend, since it was the first time receiving the Real Presence since mid-March. I know Father Kyle and Father Edgardo have been moved as well by this powerful witness of the centrality of the Eucharist to our Christian, Catholic identity. I pray that as “Shelter in Place” restrictions ease and more are able to gather together to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, that we take advantage of this great gift God has given to us. I pray and hope it sparks a spirit of renewal in our parish community and that we come to see our gathering together at Mass as the most fundamentally important activity we do. Everything else we do as a parish community should flow from this action.

Although this has been quite an usual and unprecedented year, we have been blessed to celebrate rituals and rites of passage here at Saint Pius. Once again, I would like to congratulate all our parish eighth graders, seniors in high school and college, who graduated this year. We are so proud of each one of you and wish you every success, grace and blessing today and in the years to come. Remember, you will always be welcomed home here at Saint Pius! Thanks to Principal Marc Nava and Vice Principal Catie Costa, Meaghan Brennan and volunteers for sponsoring a very memorable handing-out of diplomas to our Saint Pius Catholic School graduates last Friday afternoon. Each graduating family decorated their vehicles and participated in a parade through the neighborhood, led by alumnus Athena Maskarich, of the Redwood City Police Department. We were blessed to have the return of Rita Carroll, Colleen Langridge, Peggy Zappelli and former faculty and staff. It was indeed a memorable send-off!!

We were so honored to have our beloved Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone join us for Mass on Monday, June 1st. It marked the first public Mass in the Archdiocese since mid-March. The music was beautiful and we continue to be blessed by Tony Eiras, our Director of Sacred Music and Kristian Erich, our gifted volunteer organist. Kristian Erich is a graduate student at the Stanford Medical School and is one of the Stanford graduates who live in community and are active members of our parish. I want to thank John, Ryan and Raul; John Torres and the Men’s Club, Stephanie Herbst and all who contributed so much to this beautiful celebration. I would have loved to have all of us gather together that morning; however, due to county health regulations, we were only able to invite parish leaders. I know we will all be together in person soon as we have been united in spiritual communion, thought and prayer!

Fr. Tom