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**A Message from our Pastor,
Fr Regulo Imperial:
June 14, 2020**

Dear Parishioners:

Greetings of Peace!

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

The feeding of thousands of people by Jesus with five loaves and two fish was narrated by the four evangelists. And here is the touching story in the Gospel: A multitude of people were following Jesus even to the deserted places to listen to him and to experience for themselves the many miracles done by him. *“When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, he had compassion for them...When it was evening...Jesus said to them, ‘They need not go away, you give them something to eat.’”*

Lord, the past three months that we’ve been locked down in our houses, seemed to us like a dark evening of our life. We believe that You see us and out of compassion you said: *“You give them something to eat.”* Today as we celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi, it is for me and I believe, for you too, has become more meaningful, as we begin to see the hope of re-opening the door of our churches in order to be fed once again by your Body and Blood which we desperately need. We are spiritually starving and our spirit is getting low; we are almost at the rock bottom of everything we do. Come multiply your bread for all of us to eat and be nourished.

Jesus is truly God-with-us; not only spiritually but also physically. When people who love each other have to leave each other, what are the most common things they do? Two in particular: They hug long and close; and they leave something of themselves behind, maybe a picture, a poem, a ring, a flower, with the promise that he will return to be together again. The hug is literally physical, the other is symbolic. It seems to say, *“When you touch or kiss my picture, you’re touching me, and somehow we are together.*

There was a book written by Brenda Peterson entitled, *Nature and Other Mothers*. In it, she tells how at one point in her life she was afflicted by painful skin rashes. Like the woman with the hemorrhage in the Gospels, she tried every possible doctor but found no cure. Medication after medication proved ineffective, and eventually the doctors ran out of things to try. The rash always came back. One day her grandmother assessed her and pronounced a more ancient and accurate diagnosis: *“Skin needs to be touched!”* Her grandmother then began to give her regular skin massages and these did what the more sophisticated medicines couldn’t do. They cured her. Peterson’s grandmother is right: **SKIN NEEDS TO BE TOUCHED!**

God knows that better than anyone. It’s why Jesus gave us the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, skin gets touched. The Eucharist isn’t abstract, a theological instruction, a creed, a moral precept, a philosophy, or even just an intimate word. It’s bodily, an embrace, a kiss, something shockingly physical, the real presence in a deeper way than even the old metaphysics imagined.

For whatever reasons, we tend to shy away from admitting how radically physical the Eucharist actually is. St. Paul didn’t share that fear. For him, the physical communion that takes place in the Eucharist, between us and Christ as well as among ourselves, is as real and radical as sexual union. Thus, for instance, he argues against sex outside of marriage by saying that our union with Christ and each other in the Body of Christ is so intimate and real that, in effect, we would prostitute that Body if we had illicit sex. Strong words. They’re predicated on a very earthly conception of the Eucharist. The early church followed Paul on this. They understood the Eucharist as so real, so physical, and so intimate.

Christianity understands the physical and the bodily. Christianity is the most earthly of all religions. It doesn't call you out of the physical, out of the body or out of the world. Rather Christ enters the physical, becomes one with it, blesses it, redeems it and tells us that there is no reason to escape from it.

Something in that goes against the grain. Christ's relationship to the physical scandalized his contemporaries ("This is intolerable language!" is what the crowds said when Jesus spoke of the physical character of the Eucharist in John's Gospel) and is still hard for us to accept today. But it's also a wonderful part of Christianity. In the Eucharist, our skin gets touched. Pope Benedict XVI has all the reason to call the Eucharist the *sacrament of love*.

My belief in the sacrament of the Eucharist is simple: without touch, God is a monologue, an idea, a philosophy. He must touch and be touched; the instant of the touch there is no place for thinking, for talking - the silent touch affirms all that, and goes deeper: it affirms the mysteries of love and mortality.

As Pope Francis said: we are not church without the Sacraments. As we partake of the Eucharist once again, we become church for ourselves and for one another.

MAY THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST BLESS US!

Fr. Regulo Imperial, Pastor

