



I. Introduction

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Body and Blood of Jesus. We live in a world that tends to think that all religions basically believe and teach the same thing. And we also tend to gravitate to religious beliefs that make us feel good.

The celebration of the feast of Corpus is a distinctly unique Catholic Feast. No other Christian denomination understands the Eucharist the way we do. Sadly, there is evidence to suggest that many Catholics don't understand or believe that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. A *Pew Research Forum Study in 2019* – found that less than 30% of Catholics believe that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. To give you a sense of who that 30% is... it is you, the folks sitting in this church. If I were to use our weekend Mass attendance as a measure of the registered faithful parishioners that believe in the Eucharist, you would represent 20% of our parish population. In light of these numbers... The readings offer us much to reflect on!

II. Trials Deepen Belief

In today's first reading Moses encouraged the Israelites to remember their time in the desert, especially the trying experiences. He reminds the people of Israel that they were formed by her trials there. This time of purification led Israel to a deeper knowledge of God and friendship with Him.

Times of trial bring us closer to God... They challenge our beliefs, forcing us to decide what really matters. We must decide what we are willing to do for what we believe. It is said that there are two human gestures that prove the existence of truth...

1. An authentic sacrificial love.

2. The willingness to sacrifice one's life (martyrdom).

The growth of the Church was fueled by the blood of the martyrs. The lives and deaths of those martyrs were a clear response to what they believed.

III. **Should Belief Come Easily?**

We live in a world that seeks the “easy way.” Anyone who has lived a significant amount of time realizes that the best things in life rarely come easily. So, when it comes to faith and belief, we are faced with an interesting question... Should belief come easily?

When Jesus told his followers that he was “the living bread that came down from heaven” and that they “must eat his flesh and drink his blood.” The Jews quarreled among themselves... they thought this saying was too hard. And some walked away.

Over 2000 years later it appears we are still struggling to accept His truth. True belief/faith requires work, sacrifice, and struggle. It feels uncomfortable and it is hard.

IV. **The Truth**

Jesus lived and taught the truth, as have his followers throughout the ages. In today's world the truth is determined by one's feelings. If a belief or doctrine does not align with one's feelings, it can't be true.

When Jesus says that one must eat his flesh and drink his blood. He is challenging us to move beyond our feelings and sensibilities. He is calling us to embrace His truth. Belief in Christ demands that we participate in the sacraments and most especially in the reception his Body and Blood at Mass in the Eucharist.

V. **The Sacramental Life**

The sacramental life is what separates us from our Protestant brothers and sisters. Most especially belief in who the Eucharist is. This belief distinguishes the authentic Catholic from the rest of Christianity. The Eucharist is not just a symbol, or a re-enactment of the Last Supper, or a mere spiritual presence, or a remembrance... It is the ultimate and supreme encounter with Christ. It brings us intimately into his presence.

VI. **The importance of “Presence”**

If one were to read the Catechism on the Mass and the Eucharist (CCC 1322-1419) they would see an emphasis on “presence”, in almost every paragraph. The Sacraments are encounters with the physical presence of Jesus. They remind us that salvation is accomplished through the presence of a person. Our active participation in the Mass and the reception of the Eucharist are our response to His physical presence. In the Eucharist we come in contact with the very person, love, and life of Christ.

VII. Conclusion

So here is something to think about... We live in a time of great trial and confusion. Times of trial challenge us to confront what we truly believe! We live in a culture that is struggling with gravely important issues. It is a culture that struggles to face the truth of those issues. It is a culture driven to seek the comfort of personal “feelings”

We need to think seriously about what we believe... About what really matters to us, especially as it regards our Catholic faith. The Church teaches that Jesus Christ is present in many ways... But most especially that “He is present in the Eucharist.” (CCC 1373). This teaching in the Eucharist is unique and the central truth of the Catholic Faith!

The question is can we handle that truth? And how will you and I, that 30% of faithful Catholics who believe respond? An even more intense passion for the Eucharistic would be a great start. Our eternal life and the eternal life of others depends on the fervor they see in us. When we leave here after receiving Jesus, the joy we have should be visibly evident... so much so that those we meet want to know where we are being fed? And our response should be at the table of the Lord, where we eat his body and drink his blood.

Saint Faustina, who (**Diary #1811**) had a deep and lively Eucharistic Faith reminds us that... “Eternal life must begin here on earth through Holy Communion. Each Holy Communion makes us more capable of communing with God throughout eternity.” Her point is this... more of Jesus in the Eucharist is better, much, much better.