

Our ongoing Eucharistic Revival

Dear friends in Christ, I hope you are having a blessed summer! It is a beautiful time of year, but as always, the weeks of sun and warm weather pass too quickly. One of the highlights of summer is our annual celebration of the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ—*Corpus Christi*—which recalls the beauty and grace of the Eucharist in our lives as Catholics. And with this year's *Corpus Christi* celebration, we also came to the official end of the Eucharistic Revival that has been underway for the past three years in the United States. I say "official end" because the Eucharistic Revival isn't really over at all. In fact, I think you could say it is just beginning.

You may remember that three years ago the bishops of the United States called for a "Eucharistic revival" to reinvigorate Eucharistic faith among the faithful. Far too many Catholics, even those who regularly practice the faith, have an incomplete or incorrect understanding of the Eucharist. And so, for the past three years, we have put added emphasis on the Eucharist as the center of the life of the Church. To quote Pope St. John Paul II, "The Church draws her life from the Eucharist." And the reason for this centrality is the key point of our Eucharistic faith: the Eucharist is Christ. It is the real presence of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. He has given himself to us in the Eucharist so that we may always be in communion with him, and so that we may always share in the victory he has already won for us through his death and resurrection.

Over the course of these three years, we have had diocesan Eucharistic congresses, Eucharistic preaching and catechesis, parish missions and retreats based on the Eucharist, Eucharistic processions, and additional emphasis on Eucharistic adoration. Most importantly, we have emphasized participation in the Eucharist through the Mass. Attendance at Mass has declined nationwide in recent years, especially after the recent pandemic. If people don't understand what the Mass is about, or what the Eucharist is about, we shouldn't be surprised that they stop coming. But attendance at Mass has rebounded in many places, and I hope that our renewed emphasis on the Eucharist has contributed to this trend.

Several other fruits of the Eucharistic Revival come to mind. This past year, many of our parishes and other dioceses around the country reported larger than usual numbers entering the Church at Easter. I firmly believe that our fervent love and devotion for Christ in the Eucharist has drawn many brothers and sisters into the Church, and I have no doubt that a vast number of souls are still waiting to encounter him there.

Many of our parishes have Eucharistic adoration on a regular basis, and this too is a fruit of our renewed love for Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. The time we spend in his presence is itself an act of adoration. But our prayer before the Eucharist can also be an occasion of powerful intercession for so many needs and hopes: for the Church, for families and loved ones, for priestly and religious vocations, and on and on.

Last summer, the Church throughout the United States launched an epic Eucharistic pilgrimage. From four different directions, pilgrims processed across the country with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and hundreds of thousands of people came out to participate in the pilgrimage. It was an extraordinary endeavor, and it culminated in the magnificent Tenth National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. Once again, huge numbers of people were drawn together in a joyful and prayerful celebration of our Eucharistic faith. This was one of the most moving and significant events in all my years as a priest and bishop, and I believe it will continue to bear fruit for the entire Church for years to come. In fact, the enthusiasm for this event was so great that plans are already underway for another national Eucharistic congress in 2029.

The Eucharistic Revival has been enormously fruitful, but even though the three years have run their course, I believe the Revival continues. Now, we are called to put our Eucharistic faith into action. If we desire to see the fruitfulness of the Revival endure, then we must persevere in our prayer and participation in the Eucharist. The Second Vatican Council taught us that the Eucharistic liturgy is the "source and summit" of our faith. So, it stands to reason that we should desire to participate as often and as fully as possible in the Eucharist at Mass. The Mass is our greatest prayer, and nothing should ever be allowed to draw us away from the Mass, especially on Sunday, the Lord's Day.

The Eucharist also forms us to be witnesses to others. By our living faith, we give testimony to those around us that God is with us and that he loves us with an infinite love. The more completely we live our Eucharistic faith, the more vivid our witness and selflessness will be. Christ sends us out to others just as he sent the apostles, with a mission to share the gift of our faith with the entire world. Pope Leo XIV recently said, “Strengthened by the food that God gives us, let us bring Jesus to the hearts of all, because Jesus involves everyone in his work of salvation by calling each of us to sit at his table. Blessed are those who are called, for they become witnesses of this love.”

I don’t think we’ll ever really be done with our Eucharistic Revival. It has been a time of enormous grace, and it is ongoing. Let us make Christ in the Eucharist the center of our lives, and go out into the world as his witnesses.