

## BULLETIN -- MAY 29

**Corpus Christi and John 6:66.** We've become used to seeing banners proclaiming the verse "John 3:16" draped over the grandstands at football games, apparently with the thought that if anyone doesn't know the reference, it will lead them to run home to a Bible and look it up and find out that "God so loved the world that he sent his only Son," etc. It's a key verse in Jesus' revelation of the Father, the Father's will for the world, and Christ's mission in fulfillment of the Father's will. But what if you saw the verse "John 6:66" similarly displayed? Would you know the reference? How many would pretend to shiver over their beer in the sports bar, saying, "Ooooh, spooky," since any reference to the number 666 seems to provoke goosebumps and thoughts of the Antichrist among the superstitious? Well, that verse *should* provoke somber thoughts, but not for some silly reason. It reads, "Many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him." *That* should give us goosebumps, indeed. Are you the same person NOW that you were before Christ first called you to follow him? Have you followed Christ enthusiastically for awhile, and then returned to your former way of life? Why? Because Christ's way was too demanding? Because you thought it wasn't demanding *enough*, and you got bored? Because someone talked you out of it? Because it's just easier taking what the world offers more seriously than you took Christ?

For those disciples who first "returned to their former way of life," the difference was the Eucharist, Christ's teaching about his Body and Blood being food and drink for eternal life. "*Unless* you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you," he said (John 6:53). And that was more than those disciples could take. Defy the laws of nature and feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes? Oh, they had no problem with *that* when he did it. They even had thoughts to take him and make him king. (Free bread! Free fish! Free phones! Free health care! Free college! People haven't changed much, have they?) But give us his Flesh and Blood to eat and drink? Nonsense. Impossible. "This is a hard saying," they complained, "who can listen to it?" (John 6:60). And they walked away. And maybe that's why that pew next to you or in front of you or in back of you is empty. He doesn't call them back saying, "Wait! Let me explain!" He doesn't water it down. He doesn't try to make his teaching more comfortable to attract the popular vote.

Now maybe it's not precisely the Eucharist that has pulled people away. Maybe it's some other part of the Catholic faith that has been handed on to us that is problematic. All of us, whether we've stayed or whether we've left, likely have encountered *some* teaching, *some* discipline of the faith which we in our wisdom would change in order to accommodate our wants and wishes, or in order to make faith more plausible. "If only X-Y-Z weren't a sin!" "If only the Church would let me receive Communion even though I married aside from the sacrament." "If only the Church would ordain women / married men / anyone who feels they should be." "If only bishops and priests hadn't let us down with their moral failings." "If only the preaching/music/style were more to *my* taste." No matter who we are, there's a challenge for us in the gospel of Christ, *and* in the Eucharist. And it's always going to shake us up where we are least comfortable. "If only Christ could see the logic of my situation." Indeed.

Now that doesn't mean we have to be perfectly reconciled to every facet of Christ's will for us as expressed in and through the Church every time we come to Communion. If that were true, hardly anyone, including the priest, could ever celebrate the Eucharist. But when we process to the altar and are presented with the Body and Blood of Christ, we are presented with the whole package: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. And with that package Christ includes his Bride, the Church: not the ideal Church, not the Church as we would like it to be, but the Church as it *is*, which is the only Church we've got. If we can't love her *this* way, we don't really love her at all. It's much like a wife and husband having to face that fact about each other, after their first disappointment, great or small, thrusts itself into their marital harmony. (As a married friend once pointed out, there's only a simple transposition of letters separating "marital" from "martial," *marriage* from *war*!)

So when we are presented with the Body of Christ, the very Person of Christ, whole and entire, our "Amen!" is a "Yes!" to all that he presents to us, all that he reveals to us. Like St. Peter, when the Lord asks the Twelve, "Will you also go away?" our "Amen!" often enough means, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:67-68). And after John 6:66, that's the *rest* of the story. We might not believe perfectly, we might not *behave* perfectly, but we are casting our lot with Jesus, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. For to depart is death.

And our mission to the others? We are not called to judge them, but to continue living in their midst as those who believe. We have to strive to be the very best, living our vocations joyfully, manifesting the goodness of Christ to them despite the challenges to faith that we experience ourselves. We bring the others with us every time we celebrate the Eucharist. We include them in our prayers on penitential days. We need not badger or nag, for that only drives them farther away. The practice of the faith on the part of the early martyrs was what converted so many others on the spot, seeing the living and dying *witness* to Christ on the part of those who were giving their lives for him without reserve. Will you allow yourself to be such an instrument of his grace?

**Congratulations** to parish alumnus Tomas Kuslikis, who has been recognized by Credit Union Times as one of twelve Trailblazers 40 Below. Tom currently serves as interim CFO and vice president of internal audit and compliance at the University of Michigan Credit Union in Ann Arbor.

**Memorial Day Mass** this Monday, May 30, is at our cemetery chapel on Preston Avenue at 8 a.m. We look forward to having you with us and praying for our beloved dead who await the Resurrection. Refreshments will be served after Mass.

**The First Friday of June** coincides this year with the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Please plan to join us for any or all of our services on that beautiful feast, 8 a.m. Mass, adoration all day, 7 p.m. Mass, and Holy Hour and adoration continuing until about 10 p.m. Take advantage of the opportunity to pray fervently for our deacons who will be ordained priests the next day, the First Saturday of June: Tom Cavera, Jegar Fickel, Colin Mulhall, and Dan Schumaker. God bless you!

Fr. Den

**Thought for the week:** “Scared” and “sacred” are just a typo apart. In a way, both are elements of the seventh gift of the Holy Spirit, known alternately as “fear of the Lord” and “awe in God’s presence.”