

Homily for the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ

June 13-14, 2020

Readings: Deuteronomy 8: 2-3; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6: 51-58

Preacher: Gloria Ulterino

This is my second try at a homily for this Feast. My first effort went something like this: we're invited to a Feast, but we can't go! We have to fast! The virtual celebrations that attempt to make up the difference for us simply don't do it. No, we *can't* come to the Feast.

Then George Floyd died in police custody, and nothing is the same. Will racial discrimination never end? Will peaceful protestors be taken over by a few bent on violence and destruction? Will looting never end? And damage done to shopkeepers, merely trying to earn a living? Where on earth is Jesus, the Christ in the midst of all this? Where are *we* in all this?

Then I knew. We have just witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus once again. For eighteen years I had worked with parishioners to tell the Passion by heart. But now, I have seen it. Felt it. In the failure of four policemen—now charged in the killing George Floyd—to see him as fully human and a child of God. In merciless attacks on innocent shopkeepers, agonizing over violent looting. But, in this wreckage, I've also seen Simon of Cyrene. Helping Jesus shoulder his Cross by restoring life to shopkeepers. Working through the protest and police leaders who walk together. Most of all, I've witnessed the lifeblood of Jesus poured out for us all out of love.

Where, then, are we, the Body and Blood of Christ, in this scene? The questions of Paul, to a troubled community in Corinth are questions for us, right here and now. What does it mean for us, in this time of pandemic, in our own troubled times, in this time of crucifixion, to participate in the Body and Blood of Jesus, the Christ, the One we follow?

Paul's world was not so very different from our own. The Corinthians could be tough. Apparently there were too many who skimmed the surface of life. Who didn't appreciate the meal set before them. Who refused to share the food they brought with those who had nothing. Who refused, in effect, to become the Body

and Blood of Christ. This was wrong! This was not of Jesus, Love Poured Out for us all! What, then, did it really mean to participate in ... to be one with ... to care deeply about and have compassion for the Body and Blood of Christ?

We've been there, with Paul. We've just witnessed savagery and depraved indifference to human life. But, we've also witnessed goodness. First responders who have taken their lives in their hands when they go to work. People who help shopkeepers clean up and start again. Neighbors who reach out to neighbors, just to make sure that they have what they need. Recognition that rage at injustice is honest and *must* be addressed, here and now, through Love Poured Out rather than violence poured out. So, then, what does it mean for us, right now, to truly participate in the Body and Blood of Christ? To discover the true meaning of Communion?

We begin with this truth: death is never the final word. It is *always* Love Poured Out. It is *always* life. Unending Life. Life to the full, here and now. So it is that we simply *cannot* return to the Feast until we have *willingly* fasted. By taking this time of sheltering in place to honestly examine our own hearts. Name our own purpose and meaning in this one precious life we've each been given. To what extent am I tempted to blame another for what I do myself? How do I choose to respond to poor leadership or even lack of leadership? To what extent does racism lurk in my heart? How best can I deal with righteous anger at injustices around me? How can I reach out to one or more people on the margins of life? How can I work with others to do so? Where am I *called* to do so, given my own life circumstances?

In these troubled times, Fr. Bryan Massingale of Fordham said this, "Only an invasion of divine love will shatter the small images of God that enable us to live undisturbed by the racism that benefits some and terrorizes so many." I agree; and I simply add this: "only an invasion of divine love will shatter" our neglect of everything it means to continually become the genuine Body and Blood of Christ, right here and right now.