

Corpus Christi (Cycle C)

It's the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus. In our Gospel reading from Luke, Jesus feeds the 5,000 with two fish and five loaves. Quite a feat! In doing so, he anticipates, of course, the Last Supper in which he instituted the Eucharist, yes, the Eucharist, which we recognize today as the very "source and summit" of our faith.

There is a turn of phrase in today's Gospel that I want to focus on this (evening/morning/afternoon), a turn of phrase that says a lot – I think – about the predicament in which we find ourselves today. The phrase? "Give them some food yourselves."

Jesus' disciples approach him with a problem, don't they? More than 5,000 people have been listening to Jesus all day long and now they're hungry. And what does Jesus tell the disciples? "Give them some food yourselves." I don't know about you, but Jesus' response would certainly have stopped me in my tracks. "Thanks, Jesus. Thanks a lot. Not sure that that's going to do the trick."

Now how does this relate to the challenge we face today? It's about hunger. I'm not talking about physical hunger, not in this case. The Early Church Fathers understood the hunger that precipitated Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and fish symbolically, as a kind of spiritual hunger. In their view, the people who had attended Jesus' sermon were hungry for something more in their lives.

We face a similar challenge in our own time and place. There's a difference, however. Today, there is a difference. Yes, people are still hungry for something more in their lives. Many in our own time and place are starving, in fact. They're starving for a sense of meaning in their lives. But given the noise that our culture bombards us with each and every day, they don't even know they're hungry, let alone starving.

But they are. Many are hungry, indeed, for something more in their lives. What are they hungry for? The Eucharist, in fact... Many are starving – whether they know it or not – for an encounter with the real presence of Jesus in their lives.

So what can we do? Turn it over to Jesus? Makes sense at a certain level. That's certainly what the disciples did. Again, however, what did Jesus say? "Give them some

food yourselves.” I suspect that Jesus would say – indeed, is saying – the same to you and me in our own time and place: “Give them some food yourselves.”

How do we do that? Well, that’s the challenge our parish council has been wrestling with for over a year, particularly as it pertains to our youth and young adults. And so some concrete steps, some concrete steps we’ve taken to date or will soon take to welcome those whom we love back to church and – along with them – some of our hungry friends and neighbors, too.

- In the Fall of 2024, the parish’s Faith Formation Program was expanded to include a weekly session for parents mirroring the sessions provided for their children. This initiative has worked quite well.
- In June 2024, a series on apologetics was launched in our weekly bulletin. In last year’s focus groups, many of you told us that you don’t know how to explain our faith. And so these columns... As of today, some 55 such columns have been published. We hope they’re helpful.
- A decision was made in the Spring of 2024 to finance the attendance of several of our youth and a number of our catechists, too, at the National Eucharistic Congress held in Indianapolis, a truly remarkable experience for all of us.
- In June 2024, the parish resumed a weekly presence in the Edinburgh Courier. We’re no longer hiding under a bushel basket.
- In July 2024, we decided to bring our OCIA Program “in-house” rather than rely on St. Bartholomew’s for this purpose. This has made it much more convenient for inquirers to attend these sessions. This includes sessions in English and Spanish. The Spanish-language option has been particularly well-attended. A thematic approach to our OCIA Program was adopted as well. Our new Emmaus Journey theme focuses on Jesus’ personal invitation to discipleship.
- In August 2024, we adopted two petitions in our Sunday Prayers of the Faithful that specifically concern those who may be estranged – for any reason – from the Church.

- In August 2024, we also introduced a new Rosary Ministry focused on all who are alienated from the Church. You can still sign up for this ministry in the entryway.
- Beginning in January 2025, a welcoming message addressed to guests and visitors was inserted – as you well know by now – at the beginning of our pre-Mass announcements.
- In March 2025, we committed to a parish mission that will be led by the renowned evangelist Father James Sishko. It will take place in September.
- In April 2025, we launched another new feature in our weekly bulletin. Our new Q&A column is driven by questions you pose. Again, our goal is to enable you to better respond to questions raised by family members and friends concerning our faith. Today’s Q&A concerns the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.
- And today, we’re launching a new effort. In our focus groups, many of you shared your concerns about your children and grandchildren. We get it. So many of us are in the same boat in this regard. And so the prayer cards that you can find at the end of your pews. Please pass them down if you will. The front is a picture of the “good shepherd,” Jesus, and, on the back, you’ll find a note of sorts addressed to someone you love. It’s an invitation to them to welcome Jesus back into their lives. We hope you’ll share one or more of these cards with those whom you love who may have drifted away from the Church.
- And this coming Saturday at 9:00 a.m., we’ll welcome our neighbors onto our campus for an open house entitled “Ask a Catholic Anything.” We’re hoping to provide a welcoming environment in which our non-Catholic neighbors can explore any questions they may have about our Catholic faith. Consider inviting a non-Catholic friend or neighbor to join you in attending one of these quarterly sessions.

That’s a lot, I know. Some of the initiatives are big and some are small. Will any of them work? Can we expect that those who are truly hungry for more in their lives will come streaming into Mass in the coming weeks? I don’t know. We’ll see. That said, I trust that God is here among us and that God can accomplish anything.

Still, it's not entirely up to God, is it? Again, remember Jesus' words: "Give them some food yourselves." Yes, "yourselves!" That's you and me, folks.