

Feast of *Corpus Christi*, Cycle C: 6 June, 2010

For those of us who live in the South, the divisions that we witness within Christianity are not too surprising. We have witnessed these phenomena all of our lives, especially if you were born and reared in the South. It seems that every few years another new denomination rises to the fore and grabs the headlines along with new members. We often wonder what gives rise to this regeneration within the Protestant psyche. Well, it appears that they usually have disagreements regarding belief, practice or governance and these distinctions lead to outright anger, name calling or contempt. However, in reality, most Christians share a number of core beliefs: for example, Jesus is the Son of God, that he redeemed us through his death and resurrection, that God is Trinity (Father, Son & Holy Spirit) and etc.

But the differences are real, especially when we view them in the context of our Catholic faith. We Catholics are unique in a number of ways---- our liturgy, devotions, our hierarchical structure, and the role of Mary are just a few examples that separate us from most Christians. However, it is our belief in the Eucharist that most sets us apart from other Christian denominations. Because we as Catholics believe some very specific and extraordinary things about what happens on our altar, because Eucharist is central to our identity. It is the "source" and the "summit" of our lives as Catholics.

But if I try and explain that to a non-Catholic or in some cases to a Catholic, I end up with just a blank stare after I've gone through a theological and philosophical explanation with all of the technical verbiage associated with it. So after a number of years, I've developed one short sentence in an attempt to simplify and sum up our beliefs, and it is as follows: What was, no longer is.

In regards to the Eucharist, it means that, even though the bread and wine appear to be unchanged, they are no longer bread and wine. They have become for us something holy, something live-giving, something eternal---the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ or in Latin, *Corpus Christi*. This seemingly ordinary and simple meal has become an encounter with our God, a true communion with the one who is, was and is to come.

What was, no longer is.

But, there is something else that we need to believe, something that in many ways is just as profound. You see the thing that we believe about the bread and wine that is consecrated on the altar, we must believe about ourselves as we return to our seats, as we leave this church and head back to our daily lives. "What was, no longer is.", doesn't just apply to the bread and wine, it also refers to us.

Now to believe, that we too can be transformed into something new by this sacred meal is a tremendous testimony of faith. In many ways it's harder to believe that we can be changed than it is to believe that bread and wine can be changed. Think about that for a second. Most of us can accept at some level that a miracle occurs on the altar, but many of us are reluctant to believe that a similar miracle can take place within us and our community as a whole. Often, we approach the altar as if we are doing something for God, when in reality it is God who wants to do something profound for, in and through us.

And it is on this the Feast of *Corpus Christi* that we gather with grateful hearts; thankful for all that our Lord has done for us and continues to do for us--- especially the gift of his Body and Blood--- made present in the Eucharist. And it is a pure gift so that we may have life and have it more abundantly. And receiving this gift of Eucharist is so much more than just consuming Christ's Body and Blood. It also means opening our hearts, minds and souls to the power of the Eucharist, which seeks to change us, not only this day, but for all eternity.

So, think about it: "What was, no longer is." And remember that it's not just about what happened at the altar, it's what has happened to each of us personally and as community.

"What was, no longer is." Now that takes faith.