

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

What a beautiful Solemnity the Church celebrates today as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (formerly called Corpus Christi). We all know the central and indispensable role the Eucharist plays in Catholic life, and so not enough can ever be said about the importance of this Sacrament. The riches, graces and depths we find in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ truly are inexhaustible!

The priests of the parish discussed and agreed that we would all preach on the same basic points in our homilies this weekend; we thought it would be important to review some basic points about the reception of Holy Communion. Allow me to take a moment to review some of the things you might have heard in the homily at Mass.

- We are to fast from everything except water and medicine for one hour before reception of Holy Communion. Included in this would be refraining from chewing gum during Mass, and most especially not chewing gum as one comes forward to receive Holy Communion! (Parents should check this with their children.)

- We are to come forward to receive Communion in a reverent procession. This is more than just a functional walking forward and we need to be attentive to the way we carry ourselves. The Communion procession is not a time for talking or doing other things; we should be joining in the singing as much as possible as we process forward.

- If you are receiving the Body of Christ in the hand, one hand is to be underneath the other, with both hands flat, not curled up. There is to be no grabbing of the Host. Hands are to be washed and clean; parents should make sure their children's hands are free of dirt, magic marker markings, *etc.*, although children are not the only ones we have seen with dirty hands.

- If you are receiving the Body of Christ on the tongue, you must open your mouth and stick out your tongue. Do not expect the minister to have to maneuver to place the Host in your mouth — stick out your tongue! Also, let the minister place the Host on your tongue; do not bite it or grab it with your lips.

- Communicants must remember to say “Amen” after the minister says, “The Body of Christ” or the “Blood of Christ.” That moment is an important moment to express faith, and the Church asks that the ritual reception of Communion take place as a dialogue. Your response of “Amen” expresses both your belief in what you are receiving — the actual Real Presence, the Body and Blood, of Christ — and your understanding of the consequences of being in Communion with the Lord, namely, the way you are called to be transformed to live the life of Christ.

- If you have received the Body of Christ in the hand, immediately place the Host in your mouth; do not begin to walk away with it. Proper reverence for the Sacred Species demands that it be consumed immediately and not carried around.

- When we return to our seat after receiving Holy Communion, we are to pray by joining in the singing. Reception of Holy Communion is a communal ritual action, not a private one. Once all have received Communion and the singing ends, then we all sit together in silence for some time for our individual and personal prayer.

Careful attention on the part of all of us concerning our ritual behavior during the reception of Holy Communion will greatly enhance the reverence and dignity of our celebration of the Eucharist.

Don't wait too long for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick!

While we're on the subject of sacraments, let me say a word about the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. I wish to urge everyone to make sure they or their loved ones receive the Sacrament at the beginning of the illness. This is no longer understood as the Sacrament of “Extreme Unction” and therefore it is wrong to wait until the person is at the point of death before calling the priest. Please make sure this Sacrament is celebrated early in the illness when the person can derive the spiritual comfort and benefits the Church intends.

Patronal Feast Mass

Please plan on joining us for the Patronal Feast Mass this Thursday night, June 26 at 7:30 p.m. The Feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is usually celebrated on June 27, but this year June 27 is the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, so for the sake of being able to celebrate the Marian feast we have moved our celebration to the night before, when we won't have a conflict of liturgical days.

We will honor the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at this Mass, and our Offertory Procession will be the bringing forward of food offerings for the poor, as we have done on Thanksgiving Day and at the Holy Thursday Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. Hospitality will follow the Mass. I do hope you and your family will join in the celebration.

Mass for the Homebound

Another special Mass takes place next Sunday at 12:30 p.m. as we welcome our homebound parishioners to come to this Mass. We need to constantly remember that there are members of our parish family in the body of Christ who cannot be with us each week. Eucharistic communion is maintained with these brothers and sisters through the generous ministry of our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who bring Communion to the homebound. We thought it would be good to have these folks come to Mass for one special occasion as a visible reminder of our connection to them, and to offer them the support and love of the entire parish community. We want our homebound parishioners to know they are not forgotten, that we care deeply for them, and that they remain an important part of our community.

I am grateful for the ministry provided week after week by the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who bring Communion to the sick and homebound, and for the assistance those ministers have provided in coordinating the attendance of our homebound parishioners at this Mass. All are welcome to attend the 12:30 Mass next Sunday to pray with and to express our solidarity with our homebound parishioners.

St Mark Meeting Room

I am happy to announce to you that we have a new name for what has, up to this point, been called the "rectory meeting room." This

meeting room will now be called the St. Mark Meeting Room, and it joins the St. Lucy Meeting Room in the lower level of the rectory. The St. Mark meeting room is the smaller meeting room down the hall from the St. Lucy Meeting Room.

Pastoral Staff Overnight

Sunday night and all day Monday, June 22 and 23, the entire Pastoral Staff (the nine names listed on the front of the bulletin) will be away at the Sisters of Mercy Retreat House in Water Mill (on the east end of Long Island). Unfortunately, this will be an overnight and a full day not of rest and recreation, but of work, as we will be doing pastoral and calendar planning for the upcoming ministerial year, September 2014 through June 2015. This will be an important time together that will give us the opportunity not only for planning and not only for discussing larger goals and the direction of the parish, but also for spending time together to increase our effectiveness as a staff and to deepen our sense of collaboration and cooperation. Please take a moment tonight and/or tomorrow to offer a prayer for the success of our time away.

Hopefully, we will all still be speaking to one another upon our return! (*Just kidding...*)

No Priest Transfers! Hooray!

This upcoming week in June marks an historic moment in the life of OLPH: **it is the first time in several years there are NO priest transfers!!!** That's right, there are no priests leaving and no new priests arriving! Fr. John, Fr. Ethel and I are very, very happy to be staying put, and we hope that this is the beginning of a long, long period of stability at OLPH.

June 27, 2014: Two Years as Your Pastor

This week, June 27 marks the completion of my second year as your Pastor, and the word that continues to echo in my prayer is the word **gratitude**. I am extremely grateful to be here at OLPH and to be able to serve all of you. I am constantly inspired by the faith, love, devotion and hard work of the other priests, deacons and pastoral staff members. They stir me to try to be the best I can be. I am humbled and impressed by the devotion and commitment

of all the parishioners who so generously and selflessly offer their time and their talent in all of our various ministries and endeavors. It is because of all of YOU that OLPH has become a “model parish” and “the place to be.” I look forward to many, many more years as your Pastor.

In conclusion...

Together, let's aim high in Christ.
Together, let's bring out the best in each other.
Together, let's be the best we can be in Christ.

And let's always remember: LOVE IS A GIFT.

Sincerely,