

Cycle B – Feast of Corpus Christi

I thought I would share with you the top ten things about our faith that I have been asked, challenged with or that simply drive me crazy. Of course there will be some commentary to go along with this list.

10. As Catholics many of us come to mass at the last minute and we leave at the earliest possible point of escape which is usually right after communion. I have been guilty of this myself but I always try and remind myself that Judas was the first to leave the table at the Last Supper.

9. The Pope's brother use to own a fish market so when his business was struggling the pope decided to start this idea of fasting to help him. Believe it or not some people actually believe that garbage. The fact is that the early church fathers felt since Christ shed His blood on a Friday, we should not eat any animal which shed its blood on Friday. Remember the animals slaughtered had to be eaten the same day or the meat would go bad making people sick while fish actually would stay a few days without getting anyone sick. It just smells real fishy. Many Catholics think that the only time we are to abstain from meat is on Ash Wednesday and Fridays is during lent. This is not true, we are to fast on all Fridays but are free of that obligation when we sacrifice something in place of meat, but only outside of Lent.

8. I don't want to hear about politics in the homilies. Homilies can be on the readings, church teachings and even current events as it relates to our faith. When a deacon is ordained, his primary ministry as a deacon is to live out social justice and that can get pretty political. I don't feel people really care if they hear about politics in the homilies it's just that quite often the subject covered ruffles our feathers. We are called out at church and forced to look in the mirror to see where our actions or more likely inactions have contributed to grave situations existing today and we have in fact contributed to the "*sin of the community*".

7. Catholics are nothing more than statue worshippers. I wonder how many of you came here hoping that when you prayed to the tapestries in the back or the statue of St. Peter Damian that your prayer would come true. I really feel so sorry for people who actually believe this or perpetuate the myth and it makes me question the depth of their faith. Statues and other artwork are sacramentals. They remind us of our faith and may represent something or someone near and dear to us. Does anyone here think the tapestries on our walls or our statues are God? Good, I didn't think so.

6. People who feel it is their duty to come up to me and tell me why they don't go to church looking for approval. This happens in the weirdest places, the first time was after I was ordained was at a wedding in the men's room minding my own business. It has happened on the baseball field, family gatherings and in the grocery store. I always feel sad for those people because I have never heard a reason where God was the problem only some ridiculous excuse so they don't have to go.

5. The idea that hell and purgatory are old world ideas whose time has passed. They are very real places. While we must strive for heaven, purgatory is still a kind of safety net because it is kind of like the vestibule to heaven. If we get there we'll eventually get to

heaven. Hell is another story. Once there we are done but it is our choice. That choice is made by how we love God and each other in this life. The church will never tell you someone specifically is in hell because that can be interpreted as denying god's infinite mercy. Jesus is the one who came closest when he said in reference to Judas that it would have been better for him if he had never been born.

4. It's man's law that priests are to remain unmarried so they should change be allowed. Believe me when I say the Church got this right. There are many theological explanations but Jesus and the apostles were not married, though Peter was at one time. I mention this because you don't really believe that it was Jesus' style to go around breaking up families, do you? If you look at it from our society in 2012 I think there are other than the theological reasons. I know that this is a generous community but how would you feel if I was your pastor and I came to you and expected you to kick in for my children's college education? Or if there was a time when someone you loved needed the sacrament of the sick and I was too busy at one of the children's doings or some family function. Who comes first, the family or the community? There are many other reasons but these usually make people think because it affects them directly.

3. People who think that the sacrament of reconciliation is useless because they simply believe that they don't sin. There are also the people who think everything in the world is a sin. We all sin but also not everything is a sin. People who think they don't sin are just being arrogant or unrealistic. They may not mean to be but what they are really saying is that they feel they are above it. That would fall into the pride category, one of the seven deadly sins. Again we all sin and are all in need of God's infinite mercy for the way we live our lives.

2. Catholics who run out of the Eucharistic ministers' line to receive communion from a deacon or priest. We do have some people here that do this. In fact I get a good chuckle when we have a visiting priest and he switches sides at communion time. The look of sheer panic on some of your faces is priceless. It's like someone just stole your winning lottery ticket. It shouldn't matter if we receive Jesus from a Eucharistic minister, deacon, priest bishop or even the pope because Jesus is Jesus.

1. Catholics who don't understand that the Eucharist is truly the body and blood of Christ. We celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi today so naturally this would be number one. We heard in today's Gospel the account of the Last Supper and I feel this passage says it all. But for me the most compelling scripture is where Jesus is speaking to the crowds with his disciples and he flat out states....Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you. After he says this, the disciples try to get him to clarify and He repeats what he said causing many followers to leave. This panics the disciples and so they try to get Jesus to state what he really means so he does by repeating himself again. This is the only place in scripture where Jesus says something three times causing everyone to leave him except the disciples and he didn't try to get them back. He let them leave because they did not believe.

Jesus was looking for the peoples' faith and fortunately for us, we have the benefit of seeing what Jesus meant by his statements. So that leaves us with one question; When we come up to receive, do we truly believe the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ or are we one of those followers who abandone our Lord by our lack of faith?