

## Homily Corpus Christi – Year A

19<sup>th</sup> June 2016

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We are what we eat. How often have you heard that phrase? In fact it could be said that over the last century we in the First World have become obsessed with the question: What will I eat? While the rest of the world asks the more fundamental question: Is there any food to eat?

The Feast of Corpus Christi or the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ is all about; what we eat. But it's more than that; Corpus Christi is about relationship. It's about communion. Corpus Christi is about our communion with our God the creator of the Universe. God is incomprehensible, completely unknowable yet God wants an intimate relationship with each and every one of us. I don't know if you have ever seen an ants nest in the bush, they can be enormous covered in ants scurrying about, literally millions of ants all intent on what they are doing. Imagine for a moment standing beside such an ants nest, when somebody comes along and says: I know each one of those ants individually I know their names, I share their joy and their pain, I love each and every one of them and

everything those ants have I have created for them. You may think this person is mad but that story, that analogy describes God's relationship to us. Granted, it's a poor analogy because compared to our infinite God we are much less than those ants. But, that infinite creator God wants to have communion, a relationship with us, God's creation. Our Bible, which an Aboriginal person once described to me as our Dreaming, our story, is a story of God's ongoing redemptive plan for God's creation. The Bible is an account of God's communion with his creation.

The Eucharist, our Holy Communion which we will celebrate today is the pinnacle of that relationship between God and His creation, us. When God lead Israel, God's chosen people out of slavery in Egypt, the houses of God's people were marked with the blood of the Paschal Lamb, or the Passover Lamb. God commanded His people to sacrifice and eat lamb or goat and to mark their houses with its blood so that God's angel would know the houses of God's people. In eating the Passover Lamb the Israelites had 'symbolically' become part of the sacrifice, a sacrifice that marked themselves as God's people. They had become what they ate. You will note I used the word

‘symbolically’ that’s important because what they ate was still only the meat of a lamb. The Passover Feast, which is still celebrated in Jewish communities today, is celebrated as a memorial of that first Passover meal, eaten on the night God led His people Israel, out of Egypt. Jesus was in fact celebrating Passover with His disciples the night he was arrested. At that meal Jesus gave us the Eucharist and said “do this as a memorial of me”. The disciples being practicing Jews understood exactly what Jesus meant by memorial, they would have understood memorial in terms of the Passover.

The Passover is a memorial not a commemoration, in the way we might commemorate the anniversary of an historic event, but it is a renewal of God’s covenant, His agreement with his people Israel. An analogy, albeit a poor one, is to think of the Passover as a renewal similar to the annual payment of your car’s registration. If you happen to be pulled-over by the police for some reason your car’s registration is only valid if it’s paid for the current year. It does not matter how many years you have owned the car if the rego is not paid up the car is not registered. Every time you pay your registration is equally important as the first

time you registered the car. The reason this is a poor analogy, and this is the tricky bit, is that it ignores the transcendent nature of the Passover memorial. The Passover transcends time, all Passover memorials are one continuum, and this is what the disciples understood by memorial.

So when Fr Peter utters the words of Institution or Consecration:

*Take this, all of you, and eat of it:  
for **this is my body** which will be given up for  
you.*

*Take this, all of you, and drink from it:  
for **this is the chalice of my blood**,  
the blood of the new and eternal covenant.  
which will be poured out for you and for many  
for the forgiveness of sins .*

*Do this in memory of me.*

He is acting “persona Christi” a Latin phrase meaning “in the person of Christ”. When Fr Peter Consecrates the bread and wine it is Christ consecrating the bread and wine. No if buts, or maybes that’s it. The priest is acting as Christ himself and we are taking part in Christ’s Last Supper meal.

I know it's hard to get your head around but we are partaking in the Last Supper. That's why we do not talk, play with our phones, answer our phones etc etc you know what I mean. We are in the presence of Christ our creator God, the God who our very existence depends. Think of it this way, if you were in the most important job interview in your life would you answer your mobile phone half way through the interview? The time we spend in Mass, that hour is infinitely more important than that interview because it's a celebration of your relationship with your Creator. The Mass demands reverence.

Why? Because in the Mass Christ becomes our Paschal Lamb and we eat the Passover meal with Christ. So these children who will receive their first Holy Communion today are sharing in their first Passover meal with Christ, that's why it's so important. If we take the time to become fully present to Christ in the Mass and ponder the words of John: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in him." We will in deed become what we eat; Corpus Christi the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.