

***Bishop Jodoin's Homely for the
Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
June 14th, 2020***

At the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Bathurst

Like you, during the pandemic, I kept in touch with my loved ones via the internet and the telephone. Luckily, we had these means to communicate. One day, one of my nieces, who is also my goddaughter, sent me pictures of the first loaves bread she had made. She was proud. But she was not the only one. An exceptional phenomenon occurred during the pandemic: grocery stores experienced a shortage of flour and yeast. At one point, there was none to be found. Suppliers are unable to fulfill merchant orders. Why? Because we started to make bread as a family! To rediscover the pleasure of making it, of smelling the aroma of hot bread coming out of the oven and then of eating it of course. There is nothing better. It is a food staple in practically all civilizations, among all peoples, no matter the era or the continent.

And I know that in Acadia, we make good household bread. We have the expertise. I have never eaten such good bread as I have here, and I would eat it even more often because the Acadians have exceptional know-how! (I salute Madame Lanteigne in Bas-Caraquet for her good bread!) In today's readings, we are told of bread, and also of wine, a drink that like bread is a basic element for meals, especially around the Mediterranean and in Palestine where Jesus lived.

It is important to eat well, to be well nourished. However, the Lord also reminded the Jewish people who were in exile in the desert that *"man does not live only on bread, but on everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord."* So the Lord gave manna to His people to feed their hunger. But this food was perishable and they had to go get it every day. This was to show them that they could not rely on only themselves to stay alive. They also had to rely on God every day because human beings cannot be self-sufficient. God must occupy a special place in their lives.

As today's Gospel points out, the fathers in the desert ate the food given to them by the Lord, but one day they died, but Christ is *"the living bread which came down from heaven: if anyone eats this bread, he will live forever."* This is what is wonderful for us. Thanks to Christ who gives himself to us as food, we will overcome death and live forever in his love and in his peace.

During the pandemic, the government identified essential services such as going to the grocery store, the pharmacy, etc. Going to church, however, was not considered an essential service. Yet it is probably the most essential service! Because the food provided by the

grocery store allows us to live for a while but not forever. Death will be there one day. Doctors send us to the pharmacy to get medicines to cure certain illnesses, but nothing can cure us of death! Scientists are desperately looking for a vaccine to cure us of the Coronavirus, but they will never find a vaccine to overcome death either. Environmentalists can take steps to keep the earth from dying, but death will always be there for human beings. These are essential services but for a limited lifespan, a very short one in fact, even if it lasted 100 years. The only essential service that can overcome death and give us eternal life is the Eucharist:

"If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man, and if you do not drink blood, you have no life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life; and I will resuscitate him on the last day!" That is why, for us who have faith, celebrating the Eucharist is so central, and to be deprived of it is difficult to accept. It is of course important to believe in Christ and to come to Him, but the Lord also asks us to commune with all his person; to remain in Him and Him in us; to have in us the life of the Risen. It is not optional in our baptized life; it is an essential food, the real food. This current pandemic is currently forcing many people to live a spiritual communion, a situation which deepens even more this desire in their hearts for a real communion with the Body and the Blood of Christ, as soon as conditions allow.

For not only does communing with the Body and the Blood of Christ allow Him to dwell in us and for us to be in communion with Him, but this also puts us in communion with all our brothers and sisters of faith (from whatever place, origin, or nationality). As Saint Paul says in the second reading: *"since there is only one bread, the multitude that we are is one body... the Body of Christ."* In communion with our brothers and sisters gathered here and with those from around the world, we are also in communion with those who have already conquered death and who now enjoy the eternal life promised with God; this is a way for us to remain united with our loved ones who have passed away.

On this beautiful day, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, let us give thanks to Christ who, by his sacrifice on the cross, conquered death and now gives himself to us as food to make us risen: *"For He is the living bread from heaven: whoever eats this bread will live forever!"* A living bread that allows us to be in communion with our brothers and sisters who still with us and with those who are already with God. Amen