

## **Deacon Mike's Sermon from June 18, 2017**

Back in the 1970s, when there was a lot of questionable liturgical changes going on, Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement, invited a young priest to celebrate Mass at the headquarters.

The priest decided to do something that he thought was relevant and hip. He asked Dorothy if she had a coffee cup he could borrow.

She found one in the kitchen and brought it to him. And, he took that cup and used it as the chalice to celebrate Mass.

When it was over, Dorothy picked up the cup, found a small gardening tool, and went to the backyard.

She knelt down, dug a hole, kissed the coffee cup, and buried it in the earth.

With that simple gesture, Dorothy Day showed that she understood something that so many of us today don't: she knew that Christ was truly present in something as ordinary as a ceramic cup.

And that it could never be just a coffee cup again.

She understood the power and reality of His presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

Which is really the sum and substance of what we celebrate on this feast of Corpus Christi.

The reason for what we will do this weekend and especially at the 11 am Mass celebrating with the monstrance, the music, the procession – isn't to glorify an inanimate object, a bit of bread contained in a dish.

It is to remind the world that in that bread, we have been given Christ.

Not an idea. Not a symbol. Not an abstract bit of theology. No. It is wider and deeper and more mysterious than that.

Look at that host — and you look at Christ.

Centuries ago, one of the Fathers of the Church described how the first Christians received communion.

They did it the way we do it today, offering their outstretched hands, one over another.

And he offered this instruction: "Make of your hands a throne," he wrote. Make yourselves ready to receive a king.

Do we all understand that today? I'm not so sure. Too often, I think many see the minister of Holy Communion as just a **liturgical Pez dispenser** –

passing out a sliver of bread, again and again and again, and we don't truly, truly, realize what is happening.

I'll tell you what is happening.

We are receiving an incalculable gift. We are taking into our hands, and placing on our tongues, something that is simply astounding.

We are being given God.

Look at the host, and you look at Christ.

Too often, we take it for granted. It's just one more part of the Mass. Something else to do. We pay our weekly dues.....

No. It isn't!!!!

Look at the host, and you look at Christ.

Everything we are, everything we believe, everything we celebrate around this altar comes down to that incredible truth.

What began two thousand years ago in an upper room continues here, and now, and at Catholic altars around the world.

The very source of our salvation is transformed into something you can hold in the palm of your hand.

There is a religious, Sister Camille D'Arienzo, who tells the story of a priest who was pouring some unconsecrated communion wafers from a bag, to get ready for Mass.

Some fell on the floor. He bent down and picked up the stray hosts, just ordinary wafers, unconsecrated, to throw them out.

And he held one between his thumb and forefinger and showed it to her. "Just think," .....he said, "**what this could have become.**"

Just think what we become when we receive the body of Christ. We become nothing less than living tabernacles. God dwells within us.

We become what we receive.

And what we receive becomes us.

That is the great mystery, and great grace, the great gift of this most blessed sacrament.

My question on this feast: what will we do with that knowledge?

Once we have been transformed, by bread that has been transformed, **how can we leave this holy place without seeking to transform the world?**

How can we just go out and head to brunch, or dinner, or out to do yardwork or the weekly grocery shopping?

We carry something greater than ourselves. And that makes us instruments of God's great work in the world – literally.

In some small way, we have been changed.

You'll notice that when the priest or deacon celebrates Benediction, he uses what is called a "humeral veil."

He wraps this long cloth around his hands and then takes hold of the monstrance to offer a blessing.

There is a reason for that. It is to signify that the blessing comes not from the hands of the priest or deacon.

It comes from Christ himself. The one holding the monstrance is merely the instrument.

When we receive communion, that is true for each of us.

We become instruments of Christ, bearers of Christ.

Dorothy Day knew that an ordinary cup that had contained the blood of Christ could never be just a cup again.

Well, what's true for a ceramic cup is true for each of us.

Once we have received him, we should never ever be the same again.

What will we do with that knowledge?

How will we use what ought to have changed us.....to change the world that surrounds us? Amen now and

forever! JMJ

