

Corpus Christi - June 14

One of the most marvelous things in connection with our holy religion is the Blessed Sacrament, the Body and Blood of Christ. It is our Lord's gift to us on the night of his betrayal when he was about to lay down his life as a victim on the cross for our salvation. "Greater love has no one than this," he said, "than to lay down one's life for his friends." [Jn. 15:13]

Not content with dying, Jesus planned that his presence should always be with his loved ones in the world, and that he would give himself to be their life through the process of death. He promised his disciples when he was about to depart from them, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world." [Matt. 28:20] So, he instituted the Blessed Sacrament, and commanded the Apostles, and down through the centuries through them, "Take and eat; this is my body, drink all of this, this is my blood." [Matt. 26:27-28]

Where the Blessed Sacrament is, there Christ must be, not only his body and blood but his soul and divinity. And so we set up in the church the tabernacle, which is to contain the consecrated hosts. That church [is] a little bit of heaven, the court of heaven, brought down to earth because Christ the King comes down into the tabernacle.

But consider what that involves for Christ. Sometimes the faithful come to visit him, but oftener they forget and he is left alone. Think of all the churches through the world, very few of the faithful come in the course of a whole day to make a visit. Yet Jesus has remained there in the tabernacle because where his body is, there he himself must be, because of the union of his humanity with the divinity. Others may come and may go but he must remain, even in loneliness, darkness, the cold of winter, the heat of summer, oftentimes all sorts of neglects manifested to him. Often times there is neglect by priests to look after him: sometimes the linens are torn, soiled and dirty. Amid the filth he has to abide. What a wonderful penalty to put upon himself for the love he bore the sons of men.

But as far as ourselves are concerned, how eager we should be to give him love for love, to express our appreciation of that abiding presence with us, never to forget that in the tabernacle is the King of kings, the Lord of glory, and to show him reverence according to our ability. (Fr. Paul's Sermon June 16, 1938)