

June 3, 2018 – Holy Trinity Sunday

Imagine a world where you get up in the morning, turn on the television and there is the Pope. He is giving one of his talks and everybody watches him against the backdrop of Saint Peter's. But St. Peter's isn't white, Saint Peter's is more green than white. And there is a Christian family from the Middle East and they're begging on the streets of Rome. This is a world without the Knights of Columbus. The image sets tone for the state in which the church and many neighborhoods and families would be, if the Knights of Columbus did not exist, if they did not carry out the work they do. They are often the unseen force that has made God's voice audible in the poor, widows, children, the nation and our Church. Many churches, many Catholic schools would not be here, if it weren't for the Knights of Columbus. It was the Knights of Columbus who funded the greatest restoration of the façade, the face of Saint Peter's, in 350 years. 65,000 square feet, so that it looks like what we see today. So, when you see Saint Peter's on TV, the way it looks is because of the Knights of Columbus. It was the Knights who fought in the 1950s for the phrase, "Under God" to be put in the Pledge of Allegiance, to go against communism of the time. It was the Knights of Columbus who helped dozens of priests and seminarians during the Mexican Cristero war, in the early 1900s, when Mexico outlawed Catholicism, and they had to flee the country. It's also the Knights of Columbus who went up against and helped the victims of the Ku Klux Klan, in the southeastern United States, when they were going against Catholics. It is they who still help thousands of priests cover the cost of seminary. They give winter coats to children. They help persecuted Christians. They respond incredibly to natural disasters. They provide top rated insurance for those who need it, and they save unborn children by providing free ultrasounds to expectant mothers. And those same Knights of Columbus are still in our midst and we here at Saint Michael the Archangel are trying to get them even more in our midst. Transforming our culture in what they do in the United States: in education, advancing and sustaining our parishes, giving wheelchairs to families in need, consistently serving in the Special Olympics, building houses, accompanying veterans where they need to go and helping them and their college students and children.

I was a Knights of Columbus before I was a seminarian, many years before I was seminarian. I held offices in the council and the assembly. We did tons of good works. They have given over \$1.5 billion, in the last 10 years, to charity, to the Church. And they have given billions and billions of hours in volunteer activities to help all these charities and more. It is these men who you'll see in some parishes, grilling at functions. They love to go out and grill meat. When I was in Texas, where I joined, they had a 5000-gallon tank converted into a barbecue grill and once a month they would barbecue chickens. The Knights would set up on Friday night, and they would start barbecuing chickens throughout the weekend. Then they would have a breakfast in the school cafeteria. The pastor would always say, "Mom's day off." You could go down and have breakfast and support the school and buy chickens and support the school. They do all sorts of grilling and things like that. Many people say, "Well, how come they sell Tootsie Roll's?" They sell Tootsie Roll's because the charity behind them is the handicapped, special needs. They are the ones who stand out in the weather to do that. My brother did that and I still have a big box of Tootsie Roll's. You have to nuke them now to make them soft. So, I owe my Tootsie Roll's to the Knights of Columbus. We are trying to get a council going here. If you would like to be part of an organization that does nothing but help wherever they are needed, then talk to the Knights of Columbus after this Mass. And whenever you see one say, "Thank you Sir Knight." Just like you would say, "Thank you for your service," to someone in the military.

Some people were thinking that was homily. You should know better.

Today we celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi, The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Eucharist is the foundation of our faith. All of our doctrines and dogmas go back to two areas, the Trinity and the Eucharist. Most of the Trinity that we talked about last week, we don't have much experience with, because They are up there. But, the body and blood of Jesus Christ is right here, and so it's the foundation of our faith.

In our first reading, we read about the bloody sacrifices that are being made, the sprinkling of blood. The altar that the blood was sprinkled on represented God. The bloody sacrifices making atonement for sins, offering praise, the things we do at Mass today. We always need to be reminded that there is someone greater than us, that's why we offer the Mass. Jesus and God did not want bloody sacrifices. If you and I went back to that time, we would be shocked at the amount of blood that was being spilled. Every time you did something, you had to sacrifice. Every time you wanted to get in with the gods, pagan or God the Father, sacrifice. Something got killed, blood went everywhere. People walked around with blood on their clothes because after they'd been to the temple, the priest would sprinkle them with the blood, like I do with holy water here. It's a totally different mindset. God, when he became man Jesus Christ, He decided that once he shed his blood, that would be the end of bloody sacrifices. This was the last bloody sacrifice acceptable in that Judeo Christian heritage. Jesus took on the role of the sacrificial victim and the Lamb. Both of these things have symbology behind them. Once a year, the high priest in the synagogue would bring in a goat and put his hands on the goat and impart the sins of the people onto the goat. Then, the goat would be set out into the desert to die, it was called a scape goat. Jesus was that, He took on our sins to die. But he is also the Lamb of sacrifice to make reparation for our sins. With Jesus, the bloody sacrifices ended because on Holy Thursday he gave us, at the last supper, His body and blood in another form, more acceptable to the world. The bread becomes His flesh the wine becomes His blood. In the early Church, we were called cannibals because we said we ate the body and blood. Can you imagine if in a tabernacle today we kept meat and blood? We'd be cannibals. Most people wouldn't want to go to communion because it would be raw flesh, it wouldn't be grilled by the Knights of Columbus. Jesus gave us the sacrament. The body and blood, Himself contained in bread and wine. Can we see the change? No. We don't need to, we exist by faith. We walk by faith and not by sight, the psalm says. Many people today say, "Oh, it's just symbolic, Jesus was just saying symbolism." No, in John chapter 6, Jesus said you have to gnaw on My flesh and slurp my blood. That's the literal translation. And when the people said, "This stuff is too hard to stomach" and turned and walked away, did he say, "Oh no, come back I'm going to change it, it's just symbolic?" No he didn't, because He knew it was true. A lot of times people forget, people get doubts, and so Jesus will allow himself to become present in the host. The host will become a piece of flesh in some miracles. The host will bleed and other miracles. Science has already proven that both the flesh and the blood come from a Middle Eastern young man, that underwent great trauma.

In one Portuguese town, in Santarem in the 1300s. A woman faced with an unfaithful husband, went to a sorceress to see how she could win him back. The sorceress demanded a consecrated host as payment, this is sacrilege. The woman went and she got one; hid it in her veil on the way out of Mass. essentially, she excommunicated herself from the Church. As she left the church, she moved it from her veil to right here on her chest, underneath her garment. The host started bleeding; bled so much that people thought she cut her hand. She ran home in fear. She took the host and she threw it in a trunk, closed the lid and went about her business. That night, her husband came home late and they both went to sleep. All of a sudden they were awoken by a great light in the room, that was coming from the trunk. She confessed to do her husband what she had done. They sent someone to get the priest and they knelt in front of the trunk because it was now a tabernacle. The priest came, he took the host and encased it in wax to protect it and preserve it for the bishop to see. He put it in the tabernacle. The next

morning, he went to check on it. The wax had exploded off the host and was all over the tabernacle and the host was now encased in a crystal container. That host is still on view today in that parish. I had Mass in that church and you can still see the blood and the wax is still there too, on the bottom. One of the biggest miracles that happened, and we don't hear enough about this, is in Faverney, France in 1608. We had tremendous things going on in the Church, upheavals, people were denying their faith left and right. People were trying to become socialist. It took place at a Benedictine monastery. There were only six monks and two novices left, because of the turmoil in France. It had a tradition of on Pentecost Sunday and the following Monday, of inviting the faithful in for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, you take the host, the priests' host which is consecrated and you put it in a container called a monstrance. (Showing the monstrance to the congregation) The host goes in here, it goes on a throne on the altar, and people worship in awe in veneration for two hours or one hour, whatever. I brought this out because a lot of people don't know what this is, they never see it. This is a monstrance. Show and tell. What happened was, it was on view for adoration on Pentecost Sunday and that night the sacristan locked up and left Jesus in the monstrance on the altar as well as two oil lamps. The next morning, Monday morning, he went in to open up to continue the adoration, smoke filled the church, the altar was on fire. He ran to tell the other monks; they came to try and put out the fire and something miraculous happened. After the flames were extinguished, the monstrance was hovering at an angle above where the altar had been. There was no altar. It was hovering in midair. The monks fell down in adoration. All of the towns people, all of the people that didn't believe, everyone in the vicinity came in to see this miracle. Monday morning, they put up at a temporary table to make it an Altar. The priest started saying Mass, one after another after another, until Tuesday morning at 10 o'clock. The monstrance with the host hovered above the altar the whole time. Finally, at 10 o'clock, the monstrance straightened up and came down and rested on the temporary altar. It had been in midair for 33 hours. Huge crowds had come to Masses to see this thing. So many witnesses, the bishop didn't have a choice but to declare it a miracle.

There are many others there's a whole book of them called, "Eucharistic Miracles" by Joan Carroll Cruz, that's just one of them.

Jesus gets upset when we are not doing what he told us and taught us. "Believe in Me, listen to Me, spread the good news." A lot of times when people don't have faith, a lot of priests don't have faith sometimes, they will end up with the host that bleeds. We have to have reverence and respect. Saint Philip Neri was an apostle of Rome in the 1500s. He had a very good sense of humor, he knew how to juggle, tell jokes, all that kind of thing. You have to realize in the 1500s laughter was called rude, you couldn't laugh the table, that was considered rude. It wasn't only till recently that people were allowed to laugh in public. One lady used to come to Mass, and the moment she received communion, she'd waltz out the door, she wouldn't go back to her seat. He was worried that she had forgotten how holy the Eucharist was. Back in those days, if you went on a sick call as a priest, you'd take the host in a pyx, a little container (like the ones up here on the altar), you'd have an altar server with a bell and a candle. You would ring the bell in front of the priest to let people know, Jesus was here. People would kneel down as He went by. We don't do that as much today because of the volume of how many people we take it to. What St. Philip did was he stationed an altar server at the door at the next Mass, when she was there. She received communion, she walked out the door, the altar server followed her ringing the bell, with the candle, she was embarrassed. Everybody was looking at her outside. She turned and said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Well Maam, you just received the Lord so you're a walking tabernacle and we have to show Him honor and reference." She never left Mass after receiving communion until Mass was over, from that point on.

Jesus wants respect: God wants respect, He wants reverence because He deserves it, because of what He's done for us. We get Him to be at every mass. In the 70s and 80s, Mass was considered a meal, the emphasis was on meal. Yet for centuries and now today, they've gone back to sacrifice. Every Mass is a re-presentation of Calvary. Every mass, when we receive the Blessed Sacrament, humanity and Divinity become one. This feast happens every year to remind us of this fact, and that we need to be more reverent and respectful when we come into church, when we come up to receive communion, anything we do around the Blessed Sacrament. Because after all, it is the way for us to get to heaven.

God bless you