

The Solemnity of Corpus Christi
5/29/16
Cycle C

“Do this in memory of me.” This was command of Jesus to his disciples on the night before he died. “Do this in memory of me.” These words are repeated by the priest as he completes that part of the Eucharistic prayer called the consecration, making us present for the saving sacrifice of Christ. By recalling the very words of Jesus, our sacramental memory brings us to both the table of the Last Supper and hill of Calvary. With a singular intention Jesus offered himself at the table and on the cross. The two moments in time become a singular saving act in eternity for us. This moment now, is made part of the one saving sacrifice. As we share in the body and blood of Christ, time is transcended and transformed. So when we do this in memory of him, the Lord Jesus is the one who feeds us, sanctifies us, and reconciles us with the Father through the sacrifice of his body and blood. Jesus has reconciled all things in himself making peace through the blood of his cross. (cf. Col. 1.20)

The command of Jesus also reminds us of the sober purpose of this holiday weekend, the Memorial Day weekend. In these days, we recall those men and women who have served this country, especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice for America. Many of them died hoping that their blood would bring

an end to the ravages of war and the senseless loss of human life. Even though the horrors of armed conflict still plague the planet and exact a heavy toll, the heroism of those who fought for peace still command that we work for peace in memory of their sacrifices. Their exercise of freedom should change our own understanding of freedom. Freedom is a blessing but it is also a duty. What will we do with the freedom gained at such a price?

This past week President Obama visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial remembering the detonation of the first atomic bomb over that city 71 years ago. The mushroom cloud loomed over the city and still looms over history. The atomic bombs dropped on Japan brought a quick end to World War II but that nuclear cataclysm still haunts us still with the human and technological potential for annihilation on a horrifying scale. The president called for a moral revolution to match the technological fury that was unleashed on the people of Hiroshima. Little in his speech, though, proposed a path.

Today's feast and the gospel we have heard remind us of the still untapped potential in the sacramental fusion of the Eucharist. Jesus gave thanks for the five loaves and two fishes. (Lk. 9.11b-17) He then set off a chain reaction of charity as he handed these small portions of food to his disciples and sent them out among the multitude of hungry people. The miracle was not

simply a multiplication of food. It was a multiplication of charity. Jesus' wonderful sign hinted at the Eucharistic meal still to come. His boundless charity illustrated the generosity of his sacrifice and the role we would play in extending the richness of this table to the poor and hungry of this world. Today's gospel makes clear why the deacon of charity stands at the altar because his charity as well as our own flows from the command of Jesus, "Do this in memory of me."

Charity is the tool with which to wage the peace and put an end to the waging of war. The cross was a cruel instrument of violence used by the Roman Empire but Jesus began the work of peace through the blood of the cross. We should not doubt that he who stored such power in tiny atomic particles can unleash still greater power for good in the bread of life that is broken and shared for all. What seem like such meager portions as we gather this day can be the beginning of a chain reaction of mercy. For this reason, his command now comes to us, "Do this in memory of me."