

Corpus Christi – Year C
(June 6, 2010)

Hidden God

We celebrate today the Feast of Corpus Christ, the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. In a special way today we think and pray about what in fact we do every day, and that is celebrate the Eucharist, that great gift of God to us all.

Many years ago St. Augustine preached a sermon about the Eucharist in which he said this:

“What you see is bread and a cup. This is what your eyes report to you. But your faith has need to be taught that the bread is the Body of Christ, the cup the Blood of Christ. . . . If then you wish to understand the Body of Christ listen to the Apostle as he says to the faithful, ‘You are the Body of Christ and his members. . . .’ You reply ‘Amen’ to that which you are and by replying you give consent. For you hear ‘The Body of Christ,’ and you reply, ‘Amen.’ Be a member of the Body of Christ so that your ‘Amen’ may be true. Be what you see and receive what you are.” (Sermon 272)

I’d like to reflect with you just for a few minutes on two things from that sermon; the God that is hidden in the Eucharist and the Body of Christ.

Augustine said what you see is bread and a cup, but you know that God is there. Many centuries later St. Thomas Aquinas would pick up that notion of a hidden God. He wrote his famous hymn about the Eucharist, *Adoro te devote, latens deitas*, which we sing on Holy Thursday: Humbly I adore you, Godhead hidden here. In today’s Mass in another hymn by St. Thomas Aquinas that we sang, “Here beneath these signs are hidden/ Priceless things to sense forbidden; Signs, not things are all we see.”

It looks like bread, it looks like wine, but we know it’s more. It’s the Body and Blood of Jesus. Our God is hidden in the bread and in the wine. I would like this morning to take that notion of a hidden God and extend it beyond the sacrament that we celebrate today to all reality. St. Ignatius was fond of telling us to find God in all things. For him God was hidden everywhere, and he had the ability and the faith to see this hidden God no

matter how disguised. As the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins says, “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.” As another spiritual writer (Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs*, p. 117) says, “That brings the spiritual life down to earth – quite literally. It says God is hiding in physical reality.” Sometimes perhaps we find it easy to see God around us, especially in beautiful things, in an amazing sunset, in a beautiful piece of music, in a perfect rose, and in people we love. It’s not so easy to see God in people we don’t love or don’t even like, but God is hiding there as well – even in people we think of as great villains, like Hitler or Osama Ben Laden or Saddam Hussein or whoever our latest villain might be. In spite of what they might have done that was wrong, God loved them anyway, just as Jesus did not cease to love Judas even though he betrayed him.

But God is present in other things as well: in politics and sports, in music and art, in feelings, in childbirth and death, in what makes us happy and in what makes us sad. Isn’t that wonderful? Once we realize God’s hidden presence we can never be alone.

And I think this idea is very closely related to the notion of the Body of Christ. It’s true that technically speaking only Christians can be called members of the Body of Christ, but I think we can legitimately extend the notion in this sense: we are all of us sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ who came to save the world, the whole world, not just Christians or Catholics, but also Jews and Muslims and Hindus and anyone and everyone else who ever lived in this world of ours.

Now I’m going to make a pretty wild claim here and it’s this: if we could all of us take these two facts seriously, the presence of God in all things and in all people and our solidarity as children of God, then I am convinced that most, if not all of the world’s problems could be solved. I know, I know, I’m hopelessly optimistic and terribly unrealistic. But then as I read the Gospels it seems to me that Jesus Christ was pretty much the same way and asked all of us to be that way, too. Do you think that perhaps we could just try it? We will turn to one another in a little while and wish each other the peace of Christ and then we will come together to the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could take that peace with us as we leave this church and share it with everyone we meet? It would be a beginning, just a tiny beginning, but a beginning all

the same of solving the world's problems. What a great way to celebrate the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.