

[Spirituality](#)



Archbishop Alexander Sample of Portland, Oregon, leads nearly 1,000 worshippers in prayer before the Eucharist in Portland June 3, the Feast of Corpus Christi. It is thought to be the first ever eucharistic procession into the city's downtown. (CNS/Catholic Sentinel/Ed Langlois)



by Thomas Gumbleton

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June 7, 2018

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Last Sunday, you may remember, we read the final verses of Matthew's Gospel, and at the very end — after Jesus has sent the disciples on their mission to carry the good news to the ends of the earth — he went on to tell them, "And I will be with you until the end of the age." He promised always to be with us.

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

[June 3, 2018](#)

Exodus 24:3-8

Psalms 116

Hebrews 9:11-15

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

Today in the event that happened at the Last Supper, we celebrate one of the ways that Jesus is with us, truly present as our faith tells us, under the appearance of bread — Jesus, Son of God, son of Mary — and in the drinking of the cup of wine, again Jesus is present to us, the very Son of God, but one who is part of our human family. He's present with us until the end of time.

We celebrate what he did on that last night before he was executed. You may remember one other thing that he said. After he had changed the bread and wine into his body and blood, he told his disciples, "Do this in memory of me." Of course, I think most of us realize this is why we gather here today in this church, to do what he did in his memory, to make it happen again, to make him present to us. This of course is one of the most important ways that he continues to be with us.

But if we think about it in a little bit deeper way, when Jesus said, "Do this in memory of me," he wasn't just saying to do the ritual or take the bread and the wine, say the words, change them into my body and blood. It wasn't just the ritual that he was saying. We come to celebrate and celebrate again and again and do again and again at our altar what he did. We go through that ritual; we make Jesus present. But there was more to it when he said, "Do this in memory of me."

Because when he said, "This is my body given for you. ... This is the cup of my blood poured out for you," it wasn't just a ritual that he was saying to remember and do, it was also to give ourselves as he did, to give ourselves in love for one another, in love for our brothers and sisters in our immediate family, in our parish family, in our human family — give ourselves out of love for others. That's a little bit more than simply doing the ritual at the altar in memory of him. That part of it was so important that you may recall in John's Gospel, the story of the ritual meal where Jesus changes bread and wine into his body and blood is not recorded. John was at the Last Supper; of course he participated.

But when he wrote his gospel about 30 years after the other gospels were written, perhaps he had a sense that people hadn't really understood what Jesus said when he said, "Do this in memory of me." He meant more than doing the ritual at the altar, more than celebrating this Holy Eucharist, as sacred and as important as it is for us to do this, he meant more. So what does John describe at the Last Supper? You may remember from Holy Thursday when we celebrated that event, Jesus at one point at the Last Supper took off his outer garment, put a towel around him and went around and washed the disciples' feet.

Peter said, "No, no. You can't wash my feet. I'm not worthy of that." Jesus said, "If I don't wash your feet, you won't be part of my community." Jesus insisted he was going to do this act of service for everyone. Do you know what he said at the end? In effect he said, "Do this in memory of me." So it isn't just the ritual that makes Jesus present, it's also when we carry out his command to love one another as he has loved us, to the point for some people it happens even giving their lives for other people as he did.

But for most of us, it won't be that dramatic. If we're really going to take the lesson of this feast, listen to what Jesus says, and watch what he does and then do it, we have to increase our spirit of serving one another. There are so many ways in which we can give ourselves for others. I was present here earlier this afternoon when a wedding was taking place. I was thinking about the two young people getting married and starting a family. Who gives more than a good parent — mother or father — in giving their life for another? Probably no one does more than good parents.

I'm sure some of you are parents and you know what I'm saying. All of us grew up in a family, and if we were blessed, we had parents who gave themselves for us. That's

what Jesus wants us to do: give ourselves for one another. So it can be in our home, it can be in our neighborhood, it can be within our country. It has to be within the world, too, so that we share the goods of the earth for all and that we work to eliminate violence and killing, hatred and war, and bring peace. We have to give ourselves for one another in every way possible.

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It's up to each of us to pray about this, to think about what Jesus said, "Do this in memory of me," and not just the ritual, but also the giving of myself out of love for others. As we continue to do that, that will be the most marvelous and beautiful way we can commemorate this Feast of the Body and Blood of Jesus, that we can celebrate this feast, not just by coming here (which we hope we will do constantly, weekly), to celebrate the Eucharist, do the ritual, but leave here also committed to doing what he did: giving himself completely out of love for us that we might share God's light and love forever. "Do this in memory of me."

[Homily given June 3, 2018, at St. Clare of Montefalco in Detroit. The transcripts of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton's homilies are [posted weekly](#) to NCRonline.org. [Sign up here](#) to receive an email alert when the latest homily is posted.]