

Corpus Christi Homily

When we hear or read the words “The Body and Blood of Christ” what thoughts do we have? Depending on one’s age the answers are either predictable or unpredictable.

As the Second Vatican Council was coming to a close English was beginning to replace Latin in the celebration of the Mass in the Archdiocese of Detroit where I lived at the time.

I recall one Sunday Mass where the four-year-old brother of one of my eighth grade classmates just couldn’t contain his incredulity when he overheard our pastor distributing Holy Communion with the words: “The Body of Christ.” Peter just couldn’t contain himself any longer as he exclaimed, rather loudly, “The heck if I’m going to eat Christ’s Body.” This was Peter’s way of demonstrating his active participation as a lay person in the early Vatican II era: not quite what our pastor had anticipated.

Peter the Apostle may have had a similar reaction to Jesus’s teaching concerning eating his body and drinking his blood. We know the scriptures inform us that many of Jesus’s disciples left him and no longer followed him after he shared this bit of good news with them. Only the Twelve Apostles and a handful of disciples remained with Jesus from that time on.

Little has changed with people’s reactions over the last two thousand years concerning the body and blood of Christ. Some of the more common expressions are: “You don’t really take that literally, do you?” “Jesus didn’t really say that, did he?” “Surely Jesus didn’t mean for us to eat his body and drink his blood, did he?” “You Catholics are really strange; that is so gross.”

Yes, we are strange in the minds of many, but we are not estranged from Jesus’s teaching about his body and blood. We believe. We trust in Jesus.