

Earlier this week, I googled the greatest quotes of all time. I got back 272 million results. I admit I didn't read all of them but I did scroll through quite a few lists. Some quotes that stood out were "That which does not kill us makes us stronger", "Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value", and "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." There were a lot of memorable quotes and more than a few were quite inspirational but none of them even came close to being the most important words ever spoken on this earth.

That honor is reserved for words we heard a few minutes ago in today's second reading. Saint Paul recounts Jesus' words from the Last Supper - "This is my body that is for you", "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." These are the most important words ever expressed on this earth and we hear a version of them spoken by a priest during every Mass. They've shaped the life and spirituality of billions of people.

Jesus' gift to the Church on the night before He died wasn't the gift of His parables or His blessing. Instead, it was the gift of His very own Self under the appearance of bread and wine. He gave us an expression of God's ultimate self-giving. The Eucharist reveals how much God loves and cares for both our temporal and spiritual welfare. We get to encounter Jesus Himself, body and blood, soul and divinity. When we receive Holy Communion, we have closer contact with Jesus than any of His followers during His earthly life. In the Eucharist, the actual distance between ourselves and Christ vanishes.

As we celebrate Mass today, we're the beneficiaries of countless generations of Catholics who have preserved the truth of the sacrament of the Eucharist. They've passed along a liturgy that makes it possible for us to experience God's love in a unique way. We've been given a tradition that enables us to have access to divine love. It's a tradition that continues to grow and

unfold. But sadly, like most things, we can start to take the Eucharist for granted because it's so familiar to us. We can start to lose some of our appreciation for this miracle.

Saint Tarcisius, patron saint of altar servers, recognized how precious the Eucharist is. He was only twelve years old when he was sent to take Communion to the Christians in prison. On the way, he was stopped by boys his own age who were not Christians. The boys quickly turned on him when he refused to hand over the Eucharist. He was beaten and ultimately died from the injuries he sustained while protecting the Eucharist from desecration.

Chances are, we won't be called upon to defend the sanctity of the Eucharist with our lives. But we might be called on to defend the Eucharist from unbelief or from people that want to water down its importance – from people that say the Eucharist is just a mere symbol of Jesus, not really His Presence. It's these types of attacks that we're more likely to encounter.

Today's Gospel miracle tells of the multiplication of loaves and fish. The miracle in every Mass we celebrate is the Real Presence of Jesus under the sacramental signs of bread and wine. The sacramental presence of Jesus Christ, body and blood, soul and divinity becomes a reality on altars like ours all around the world every day. If Jesus could multiply the loaves and fish almost two thousand years ago, there shouldn't be any doubt that He can make Himself present today in the bread and wine that will be offered on our altar here today in Collierville, Tennessee. As Catholics, we believe that He can do it and He does do it.

Jesus gave us the Eucharist to be a sign of unity. It's meant to draw His followers to Him and to each other. It is, therefore, an odd thing that the Eucharist has been the subject of contention for many years. There have been debates about how to receive Communion, who can give Communion, and who can receive Communion. Maybe, it's a sign of how central the Eucharist is to our Catholic spirituality. After all, the Catechism calls the Eucharist the “source

and summit of the Christian life.” We’re sensitive about it because we care about it. It’s important to remember that receiving Holy Communion isn’t simply a private, personal gesture but a public proclamation that we’re in communion with Christ and the Church. It’s a vital response we make to what God has done and still does for us.

Our “Amen” when we receive Communion is an act of renewing our commitment to Jesus, a statement of our belief in the Real Presence and of fidelity to the Church and her teaching, and a commitment to unity with fellow Catholics. Coming to Communion means all of this. It’s not a token gesture but a profound action with many meanings. That’s why we should always approach Holy Communion with profound reverence and without mortal sin. We all need to examine the consistency of our life with the Gospel. If we aren’t the Catholics we should be, and none of us is perfect, the Lord will give us the graces we need in the Eucharist to become stronger followers. Jesus gives us nourishment for our journey to our heavenly home.

On this Feast of Corpus Christi, we not only have an opportunity to receive Jesus into our hands but also to put ourselves into His hands so He can bless and transform us. Maybe He’s asking you to give up a habit of sin, or to confess a sin that has been poisoning your life and the lives of those around you. Maybe He has put on your heart a desire to support the Church more directly, with your time, talents, or treasure. Maybe He’s simply asking some of you to put your worries and sufferings into His hands. Maybe He’s calling you to make sacrifices for your children and teach them about the Eucharist and to nourish their faith life. Deep down, each of us knows what God wants from us. And if it isn’t clear, ask Him in prayer to make it clear during this Mass.

Whatever it is, however frightening, we can have courage, because Jesus is about to show us once again just how marvelous His power is. Father Jacek is going to offer God ordinary bread

and wine on our behalf. And through the ministry of our pastor, God will take those gifts, bless them, and transform them into something absolutely extraordinary, more extraordinary even than the multiplication of loaves and fish. God will make the gifts on our altar become His own presence, His own body and blood, soul and divinity.

If he can do that, if He can transform ordinary bread and wine into heavenly food, surely He can take whatever He's asking us to give Him and turn it into something wonderful, much more wonderful than we can imagine. Brothers and sisters, if He's asking us to hand something over to Him, it's only because He wants to give us much, much more in return. Let's give Him the chance.