

Corpus Christi Sunday

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

Pastor – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Victoria, BC, Canada

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Food from Heaven; the Food that sustains us, nourishes us, strengthens our spirits, and transforms our entire lives. This is why the Eucharist has often been called the Fire of Heaven for the human soul.

Let us recall the words of John of Damascus who famously taught that the Eucharist is a fire that inflames us with Divine Love. He understood that the Eucharist is not merely a symbol but the true, life-giving Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. For him, this divine encounter purifies our souls, ignites a burning love for God, and empowers believers to overcome spiritual darkness.

This is the same teaching of St. Paul in the Second Reading. Writing to the Christians in Corinth who were struggling with divisions, factions, and leading lives contrary to the Gospel, Paul calls them to reflect on what Jesus has done and to allow themselves to be transformed by participating in this great mystery. He invites them to a genuine conversion of heart: a radical shift from their old ways to a new life modeled on Christ. St. Paul places before Christians an enormous responsibility: to understand the Eucharist and allow it to renew their lives. He speaks of becoming “partakers” in Christ. To *partake* means to receive a share in something and to enjoy its benefits. But true participation also involves responsibility. A *partaker* must be receptive and willing to share. Unfortunately, this spirit was lacking among the Corinthians. Therefore, Paul reminds them of the profound theological significance of the Eucharist: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the Blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the Body of Christ?” In other words, believe that this truly is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; and if we receive Christ, then our lives must reflect Christ.

Returning to St. John Damascene, he strongly defended the mystery of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, teaching that the bread and wine are genuinely transformed into Christ Himself. Because God is a “consuming fire”, receiving His Body and Blood sets our



souls ablaze with Divine Grace. Just as physical fire burns away impurities and provides light, so does the Eucharistic Fire purify the heart from sin and fills the soul with zeal for God and for others. This was precisely Paul's plea to the Corinthian Church: to be purified, transformed, to understand what Christ has done for us, and to learn to welcome, respect, and love one another.

In the Gospel, today, Jesus gives us one of the most beautiful teachings on the Eucharist. Holy Communion builds communion: it first unites us personally with the Lord, and then it unites us with the wider community: the family of God, and indeed all humanity. One of the sweetest promises of Jesus in this Gospel is: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in them." When we receive His Body and Blood, we become one with Him, and He becomes the very center of our lives. The word *abide* means to remain, to dwell, and to stay. Jesus does not want to be merely a visitor in our hearts, He desires to remain in us and for us to remain in Him. The Eucharist is therefore not simply something we receive; it is a relationship that is lived.

We may recall the inspiring witness of Gianna Beretta Molla, whose canonization touched the hearts of countless people around the world. Saint Gianna sacrificed her own life so that her unborn daughter, Gianna Emanuela, might live. At her beatification on April 24, 1994, Pope John Paul II praised her exemplary Christian life. He spoke of her as a devoted student, an active member of the Church, a loving wife, and a joyful mother who willingly sacrificed her life so that her child could be born. As a physician, she fully understood the consequences of her decision, yet she did not hesitate when faced with this sacrifice. In a world that often considers fidelity, purity, and self-sacrifice as outdated values, Gianna showed that these virtues remain beautiful, relevant, and life-giving. She was not extraordinary because she possessed extraordinary talents, she was extraordinary because she bravely lived what she believed.

At her canonization on May 16, 2004, Pope John Paul II reflected on her witness:

"Following the example of Christ, who loved his own to the end, this holy mother of a family remained heroically faithful to the commitment she made on the day of her

marriage. The supreme sacrifice she made testifies that only those who have the courage to give themselves totally to God and to others can truly find fulfillment and joy.”

Her husband, Pietro, once said that Gianna’s life was “a nonstop search for the will of God in every decision and every work, nourished by prayer, meditation, Holy Mass, and the Eucharist.” Therein lies the secret of her holiness: the Eucharist was not simply a Sunday devotion for her - it was the fire that shaped her life, guided her decisions, and gave her the strength to love heroically.

My dear brothers and sisters, every Eucharist places before us the same challenge. We cannot receive the Body of Christ and remain unchanged. We cannot receive the Fire of Heaven and remain cold-hearted. We cannot receive the Bread of Life and continue living as though Christ makes no difference. The Eucharist calls us to become what we receive. As we approach the Altar today, let us ask ourselves: Is Christ truly abiding in me? Is His presence transforming my thoughts, my words, my family life, my relationships, and my choices? Do others encounter Christ through me?

May the Fire of the Heavenly Eucharist ignite our hearts, purify our souls, strengthen our faith, and transform our lives. May we, like Saint Gianna, become living witnesses of Christ’s love in the world. When we allow Christ to dwell within us, we ourselves become a flame of His presence; bringing light to darkness, hope to the discouraged, love to the forgotten, and a reflection of Christ to the world.