

**Homily for Corpus Christi Mass and Procession
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

June 2, 2024

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear priests, deacons, and brothers and sisters in Christ:

In our family home where I grew up, we had a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's painting of *The Last Supper* hanging on the wall of our kitchen. Actually it was a "color by number" reprint that my mother filled in with colored paints when she was taking some art classes at the Art Institute of Chicago. I remember looking at the painting frequently whenever our family sat together at the kitchen table eating supper.

Perhaps you have a similar painting of *The Last Supper* in your home. What we might notice about any depiction of *The Last Supper* is that Jesus and His apostles are already seated or reclining at table with everything already in place as it should be. What is presumed and is not apparent in the painting is whatever work went into preparing the upper room and the food for the meal.

The scene described in today's Gospel reading from Saint Mark (Mk 14:12-16, 22-26) takes us to a few days prior to the Last Supper. Our Lord's disciples ask Him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" Jesus tells them to go into the city of Jerusalem where they will find a man who will take them to a "large upper room furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there." The disciples go and find it "just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover." Then the scene shifts to the Last Supper itself.

Since the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper is the climax of this scene in terms of its theological and sacramental significance, we might tend to overlook what comes before. Today, however, as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, known by its Latin name as *Corpus Christi*, I would like to focus on Our Lord's instruction for His disciples to make preparations for this meal, because this instruction applies to us as well as disciples of Our Lord.

So what do we do to prepare for the celebration of the Eucharist? Obviously, in terms of remote preparation, we need, first of all, a church or chapel or some other sacred place to celebrate the Mass. In most cases, our

ancestors many generations before us took these initial steps to make sure we have a worthy place to pray and celebrate the Mass. We are grateful to them for making our places of worship possible, such as this magnificent Cathedral which was dedicated in 1928 and then beautifully renovated in 2009.

Our more immediate preparations include making sure the church is cleaned during the week. Depending on the season of the year, there may be flowers or special displays set up for certain occasions such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, or Easter. For each Mass, there must be candles, altar linens, liturgical books, sufficient hosts and wine, along with chalices, patens, and ciboria to hold them. Lectors and altar servers must be trained and assigned. Music must be selected and rehearsed, and the priest or deacon must prepare a homily. Since all of this is done before any members of the congregation set foot in the church for Mass, perhaps some parishioners take it for granted and presume that somehow all of these things will be prepared, which, of course, they are.

But I think it is fair to ask how each member of the congregation should prepare for this eucharistic meal, as Our Lord asks His disciples to do. Perhaps not much thought is given to this, as some people arrive just as Mass is beginning or only a couple of minutes before Mass, or even come rushing in late after Mass has already started. If so, it would be good for each of us to heed Our Lord's instruction to go and prepare the room for this sacred meal. Now I am not talking about the church building and all the furnishings for Mass. The room that each of us must prepare for the Eucharist is the room that is in our hearts. It is in each and every heart of the faithful that preparations must be made to receive our Lord worthily in Holy Communion.

For the priest, there are prayers of preparation for Mass that are provided in *The Roman Missal*. Lay people should also say prayers of preparation, perhaps coming to church fifteen or twenty minutes before Mass to pray the Rosary and/or read the scripture readings slowly in advance so they will be on our minds when they are proclaimed out loud at Mass and then referred to in the homily.

A more basic preparation of our heart should take place if we are conscious of having committed any grave sins that we have not confessed in the Sacrament of Penance. In that case, inviting Our Lord into a sinful heart in Holy Communion would be comparable to inviting guests into your home for dinner without cleaning out all the filth and rubbish that may have accumulated there. There are ample opportunities provided for the faithful to go to confession and receive sacramental absolution, but this requires some remote planning to make sure this gets done prior to coming to Mass.

Just as it is rude to “eat and run” out the door when we are a guest for dinner in someone’s home, it is also an act of rudeness to Our Lord to run out the door of the church right after receiving Holy Communion. Similar to carrying on conversation with our host when we are a guest for dinner, we should spend some time in prayerful conversation with Our Lord after receiving Holy Communion, thanking God for the gift of the Eucharist and savoring the sweetness of His presence in our heart. The celebrant then says the Prayer after Communion on behalf of all the faithful and imparts the final blessing, after which we are told to go in peace to bring Our Lord into the world in our daily actions.

Today on this Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, we have an additional opportunity to show our love for Our Lord in the Eucharist, as we join Catholics all over the world in the ancient tradition of carrying the Blessed Sacrament in procession, not only as a sign of our common faith, devotion, and adoration of Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist, but also as a witness to the fact that Christ is also present in our world. He does not remain hidden in the tabernacles of our churches, but comes into our lives, into our very hearts and souls, each time we receive Him in the Eucharist.

This year's celebration of *Corpus Christi* continues the three-year Eucharistic Revival here in the United States. The mission of the Eucharistic Revival is "to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist."

Here in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, we held our Diocesan Eucharistic Congress with 5,000 people at the Bank of Springfield Convention Center last Fall on October 28, 2023.

The culmination of the Eucharistic Revival will be the National Eucharistic Congress, to be held in Indianapolis from July 17 to 21, 2024. At this historic event, thousands of Catholics of all ages from every diocese in

the United States are expected to gather at the Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis to worship our Risen Lord in the mystery of the Eucharist.

Eucharistic processions will come across the country from the four corners of the United to converge in Indianapolis. The western leg starting in San Francisco will come through our diocese from July 8th to July 12th, coming into our diocese from Belleville into Collinsville, and then continuing across our diocese with stops Alton, Quincy, Girard, Springfield, Effingham, and Teutopolis. All the faithful are invited to take part in these processions and Masses at these locations. The full itinerary is available on our diocesan website at dio.org/procession.

Following the National Eucharistic Congress in the summer of 2024, the “Year of Going Out On Mission” will take place from July 21, 2024, through Pentecost of 2025. The goal is to foster an increase not only in appreciation for the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, but an increase as well in the number of people attending Mass every Sunday. We pray that the Holy Spirit will enkindle a missionary fire in the heart of our nation as we reconsecrate ourselves to the source and summit of our faith.

May God give us this grace. Amen.