

Easter 2

4.27.25

Throughout the year, we give gifts to and receive gifts from family members, friends, and those we love – at Christmas, on birthdays, and special times like Valentine's Day. On Christmas morning, it was not unusual for a member of my family to exclaim, "that's the best gift ever," when seeing a present we longed for under the tree.

When we love someone, we want to share expressions of that love with them.

God is no different. God loves us deeply. And he constantly desires to share that love with us.

On the night before he died, Jesus wanted to leave a memorial of his love for his disciples. He gifted us with the Eucharist – his Body and Blood which he told us to take and eat, take and drink. Every time we celebrate Mass and partake of the Eucharist we experience Christ in a special way and receive him into our bodies. When we do so, God fills us with his love and fullness of his life. He forgives our sins and joins us together as a family as we gather around the Table of the Eucharist. What God gives us is truly the best gift ever.

God also loves us so much that he gives us this gift again, and again, and again. We can easily be tempted to look upon an occasion like the one we celebrate today as a graduation - we participated in formation classes all year long; we received the Sacrament of Reconciliation; and now, we are to receive the final prize, the Eucharist. But the Lord intends that we partake in this meal and its blessings each and every Sunday.

For my family, and I'm assuming the same is true for your family, some of our greatest memories begin when we share a meal together. Enjoying a great dinner accompanied by some funny or intense conversations happens at the family table. The love we share as a family intensifies as we participate in gatherings like that. The same is true for our faith. We share the greatest meal, we are given the most intense insights when we come together around the Eucharistic Table every Sunday.

I don't know about you, but I regularly think about my next meal. When it's 11 am, I'm thinking about lunch. When it's 5 pm, I'm thinking about dinner. Each Sunday, God is thinking about providing heavenly food to us for our meal. He wants to feed us with the Eucharist. He wants us to receive the gift of himself. He wants us to experience forgiveness through this sacrament. He wants us to have a taste of the eternal banquet that will be ours in heaven. God constantly wants us to have the best gift ever.

The opening of today's gospel occurs on Easter Sunday. All of the Apostles are gathered in the Upper Room and they are afraid. They are afraid that what happened to Jesus will happen to them. But Jesus appears to them. He breathes upon them (giving them his life). He is present to them, giving them the gift of his very self. Thomas, the

one who doubts that Jesus has risen from the dead, isn't with the group that day. When he rejoins the Apostles a week later, he doesn't believe them when they talk about how Jesus was present to them and blessed them. But at that moment, Jesus appears to the Apostles again. This time, Thomas is with the group. He sees and believes. He believes that Jesus is present to him and gives them his peace. Jesus ministers to Thomas and to us, even when our faith is shaky. He never holds back in sharing his love with us. He is always ready to share with us the best gift ever – that is, the gift of himself in the Eucharist.

I hope you understand, accept, and are grateful for this incredible gift which Jesus gives to you. I pray that you come back to Church and celebrate Mass with your family and your Church family every Sunday. And I ask you to share with others the blessings of this meal which you received – Christ's very life, his forgiveness, and the eternal life he offers to you.

Those of you receiving Holy Communion for the first time today will receive lots of gifts – maybe gift cards, maybe clothes, maybe a rosary, a prayer book or other religious item. But may you always remember and always treasure the best gift ever that comes to you today and every Sunday – the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist. May you become more like Christ because of the gift receive. And may you act more like Christ whom you've received at this Holy Mass, this Sacred Meal.

Amen? Amen!