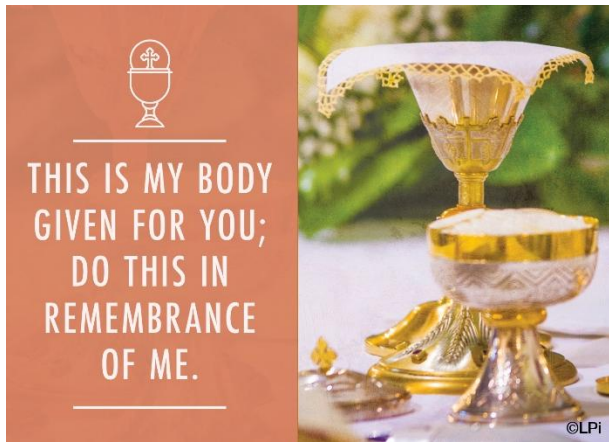


## Christ Given for You: The Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Salvation



My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. As your pastor, I have the privilege of standing with you at many of life’s most sacred moments: baptisms and weddings, times of joy and times of sorrow, moments of faith and moments of struggle. Through it all, one gift remains constant—the gift of Christ Himself, who never ceases to feed, strengthen, and accompany His people. Yet there is a danger that confronts every disciple: what is most sacred can become familiar, and what is familiar can gradually be taken for granted. This is especially true of the Holy Eucharist, the greatest treasure entrusted to the Church.

On the night before He suffered, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then He took the cup and said: “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant” (cf. Matthew 26:26–28). These words are not merely a symbol to be admired or a memory to be recalled. They are the living promise of Christ fulfilled in every Mass. What appears to our eyes as bread and wine becomes, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of Christ, His true Body and Blood. As Saint Cyril of Jerusalem taught, what seems to be bread and wine is the Body and Blood of the Lord. This has been the unwavering faith of the Church from the beginning because it is the teaching of Christ Himself.

When Jesus first revealed this mystery, many struggled to accept it. He declared: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (John 6:51). He went even further: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). These words were difficult then, and they remain challenging today. Many who heard Him turned away and no longer followed Him.

The question for us is not whether we would have walked away then, but whether we remain close to Him now. We may never leave with our feet, yet it is possible to drift away with our hearts. We can become distracted, indifferent, or inattentive to the profound mystery unfolding before us. How often do we approach the altar without preparing our hearts? How often do we receive Holy Communion routinely, without reflecting on the immeasurable gift we are receiving? How often do we fail to recognize that the Lord of heaven and earth comes to dwell within us?

Saint Paul speaks with great seriousness when he writes: “Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:27). His warning is not meant to frighten us but to awaken us. God desires that we approach Him with faith, repentance, and love.

At the same time, we must never forget that the Eucharist is not a reward for the perfect but a heavenly remedy for those who seek the Lord with sincere hearts. Christ does not invite us to His table because we are worthy by our own merits. He invites us because He loves us and desires to transform us by His grace. Whenever we come forward to receive Holy Communion, we are not receiving a thing; we are receiving a Person. The same Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, who walked the roads of Galilee, who healed the sick, forgave sinners, died upon the Cross, and rose from the dead now gives Himself entirely to us.

As Saint Paul asks: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16). This gift is beyond human comprehension, yet it carries a profound responsibility. If we receive Christ, we must allow Him to change us. The Eucharist cannot remain confined to a few moments on Sunday. It must shape our daily lives. To receive the Body of Christ means striving to forgive as He forgives. It means choosing charity over indifference, truth

over falsehood, humility over pride, and love over resentment. The Christ whom we receive at the altar should be recognized in the way we speak, serve, and care for one another. The Lord reminds us: “Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit” (John 15:5). The Eucharist is meant to transform us from within so that our lives may bear witness to His presence.

Therefore, I encourage each of you to prepare well for this sacred encounter. Examine your conscience honestly. As Scripture teaches: “Let a person examine himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup” (1 Corinthians 11:28). If you are conscious of grave sin, do not be afraid to seek the healing mercy of Christ in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The confessional is not a place of shame but a place of grace, where the Lord welcomes us, forgives us, and restores us to communion with Him.

Recover the value of silence before Mass. Arrive early when possible. Spend time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Listen attentively to the Word of God. Offer your heart to the Lord. And when you approach Holy Communion, come with the humble faith of the Gospel father who prayed: “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).

To parents, grandparents, and all who help form the young in faith, I offer a special appeal. Teach your children not only through instruction but through your example. Let them see your reverence, your prayer, and your love for the Eucharist. As the people of Israel were instructed to explain the meaning of the Passover to their children (cf. Exodus 12:26–27), so too must we teach the next generation that the Eucharist is the Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Salvation.

My dear friends, Christ holds nothing back. At every Mass He offers Himself completely. He gives us His Body and Blood, His love and mercy, His strength and His life. The question is no longer what the Eucharist is. The question is whether we will allow the Eucharist to transform who we are.

May the Lord open our eyes to recognize Him in the breaking of the bread. May He deepen our faith, renew our reverence, and inflame our hearts with love. And may the Blessed Virgin Mary, Woman of the Eucharist, lead us ever closer to her Son. To Him be glory and honor forever and ever. Amen.

Fr. Vilaire Philius  
Pastor

