

Today is a day of joy.

A day of celebration.

A day many of our children have been looking forward to for months.

Today they receive their First Holy Communion.

Today they come to the altar for the first time to receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

And today we celebrate Corpus Christi — the Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

But if we are going to understand this day properly, we must begin in the right place.

This day is not first about the children.

It is not first about families.

It is not first about photographs or celebrations.

This day is about Jesus Christ.

One of the dangers of First Holy Communion is that we can become so focused on the children that we forget what they are receiving.

The most important person in this church is not the priest.

Not the children.

Not the parents.

The most important person in this church is Jesus Christ.

And today He comes to His people.

In the Gospel, Jesus says:

**"I am the living bread which has come down from heaven."**

Those words are strong.

He does not say: "I will show you the way."

He does not say: "I will give you a symbol."

He does not say: "I will leave you a memory."

He says: **"I am the living bread."**

And then He says:

**"The bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world."**

The people listening were shocked.

Some stopped following Him.

Some could not accept it.

But Jesus does not take the words back.

He repeats them.

Again and again.

Because He means exactly what He says.

That is why Catholics have believed from the beginning that the Eucharist is truly Jesus Christ.

Not a symbol.

Not merely a reminder.

Not simply a sacred meal.

The Eucharist is Jesus Himself.

Body. Blood. Soul. And Divinity.

The same Jesus born in Bethlehem. The same Jesus who walked on water.

The same Jesus who healed the sick. The same Jesus who died upon the Cross.

The same Jesus who rose from the dead.

Present upon this altar.

Hidden beneath the appearances of bread and wine.

That is why the Church sings today in the beautiful Sequence:

The Bread of Angels.

The food of heaven.

Given not to angels.

Given to us.

What an extraordinary thought.

The Son of God gives Himself as food for His people.

And children, I want to speak to you for a moment.

Today is a wonderful day.

You have prepared carefully.

You have learned your prayers.

You have learned about the Mass.

You have learned about Jesus in the Eucharist.

And in a few moments you will come forward for the first time.

But remember this: Today is not the finish line. It is the starting line.

Imagine making a new friend and then never speaking to them again.

Imagine receiving a wonderful gift and putting it in a cupboard forever.

That would make no sense.

Today Jesus comes to you.

And He wants you to keep coming to Him.

Every Sunday at Holy Mass. In prayer. In Confession. For the rest of your life.

Because Holy Communion is not about receiving a thing.

It is about receiving a Person. Jesus wants to be your friend not just today but always.

And today we also give thanks for our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who renew their commitment before us.

That renewal matters.

Because what they handle is not ordinary bread.

What they distribute is not merely a symbol.

They are entrusted with the Church's greatest treasure.

Jesus Christ Himself.

And so we thank them for their service and pray that their love for the Eucharistic Lord may continue to deepen.

But now I want to say something, with great affection, to the parents, grandparents, godparents, and families.

Because today's Gospel is not only speaking to the children.

It is speaking to all of us.

Children learn by watching.

Far more than by listening.

They watch everything.

They watch whether Mum and Dad pray.

They watch whether Sunday Mass matters.

They watch whether faith is important.

They watch whether Jesus comes first or comes somewhere near the bottom of the list.

And after today, these children will learn far more from your example than from anything they learned in preparation classes.

If they see adults who love the Mass, they will learn to love the Mass.

If they see adults who pray, they will learn to pray.

If they see adults who receive the sacraments faithfully, they will understand that faith matters.

But if they see that today was only a ceremony...

If they see that Jesus was important enough for one special day but not important enough for next Sunday...

If they see that Holy Communion was a celebration but not a way of life...

They will learn that lesson too.

And so perhaps today the Lord is gently asking some adults a question.

If Jesus is important enough for your child to receive today, is He important enough for you to receive next Sunday?

If Jesus is important enough for photographs and celebrations, is He important enough to shape your life?

If Jesus is important enough to prepare a child for, is He important enough to return to yourself?

One Holy Communion received with love is worth more than all the treasures in the world.

The greatest gift you can give these children is not money.

Not presents.

Not a party.

Those things are lovely.

But they are not the greatest gift.

The greatest gift is faith.

A family that prays.

A family that comes to Mass.

A family that goes to Confession.

A family that loves Jesus Christ.

Because today's celebrations will end.

The photographs will be put away.

The clothes will be packed up.

The cards will be stored in drawers.

But what happens after today matters far more than today itself.

Will these children continue to receive Jesus?

Will they continue to know Him?

Will they continue to follow Him?

That depends greatly on us.

And so on this Feast of Corpus Christi, let us remember what stands before us.

Not a symbol.

Not a memory.

Not a reminder.

But Jesus Christ Himself.

The Bread of Angels.

The Food of Heaven.

The Bread of Life.

The greatest gift God has ever given to His people.

And the greatest gift these children — and all of us — will ever receive.