Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ: 6/19/22—9:30 and 11:30 AM

This homily has three parts: an advertisement, a witness, and a reflection. Concerning advertisement, you will note in today’s bulletin the announcement that our next blood drive is coming up on Sunday, July 3, from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM. This blood drive will be conducted by “Impact Life” which was formerly called “Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center,” the group that has overseen our blood drives for years and years. “Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center” changed its name to “Impact Life” in May of 2021 for obvious reasons: it’s a lot easier to remember “Impact Life” than it is to remember “Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center.” Please try to set some time aside to donate a unit of blood on July 3.

This is the advertisement; now the witness. I am not just encouraging you to donate that unit of blood because it would be a nice thing to do, but I am also encouraging you to donate that unit of blood because I have found it to be a very important thing to do. On my suit coat, I wear this lapel pin from the Red Cross that represents a drop of blood and has the number 475 on it representing 475 times I have walked through the Red Cross’ blood centers’ doors since 1990 to donate. When I received that pin a year and a half ago, it also came with a card saying that I had donated 633 units of blood since 1990. I checked earlier this week with the Red Cross for an update on those numbers and was told that I now have now walked through the Red Cross’ doors 496 times and have donated 676 units of blood; that’s over 84 gallons. I donate platelets, the clotting agent in blood, and do so roughly once every four weeks. Each time I donate platelets, I receive an email from the Red Cross telling me where they have sent my blood. Platelets help people with bleeding disorders as well as cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy and radiation. At times, a platelet donation can be shared with multiple people which means that my blood has flowed through the veins of at least 676 people giving them life and healing.

This is the witness; now the reflection. I tell you all of this not to toot my own horn but to share with you an insight about today’s feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ or usually called Corpus Christi. What are we doing when we receive Communion is nothing less than receiving a transfusion of Jesus’ Blood. When we receive Communion, we are welcoming the very life of Jesus into our lives just as much as those people who receive my platelets are welcoming my life into their lives. Just as they are letting my blood give them life, so in Communion we are letting Jesus’ Blood give us life. How easy it is to forget the significance of what we do here when we receive Communion: we receive the very true and real Presence of Jesus himself into our lives.

As many of you know, I have been conducting a survey about whether we should restore Communion from the cup at Mass. I want to thank the forty or so of you who have responded to that survey, but what disturbed me about those responses was the number of people who referred to what we partake here as “the wine.” I have no doubt that those folks believe with all their hearts that Jesus is truly and really present through what we receive here in Communion, but it is somewhat awkward to conceive of the fact that we are drinking blood in Communion. In fact, the charge that Christians drinking blood at their Masses was one of the reasons that the pagan Romans persecuted the early Church because those pagan Romans thought that doing so was barbaric. However, unless we regularly keep in mind that, in Communion at Mass, we are taking into ourselves the Body and Blood of Jesus, we are robbing ourselves from experiencing the full effect of what Communion is meant to be: a transfusion of Jesus’ own life into our lives.

My one wish is that, whenever we receive Communion, we will welcome the Blood of Christ into our lives as joyfully and as completely as do those patients who welcome my blood into their lives.