

Corpus Christi

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity of going to a Mega church in Cincinnati Ohio. I went there with Fr. Eric Knapp who is a Jesuit pastor in town. It is a non-denominational Christian church and it is pretty impressive. Thousands of people come every week to a place that the church built that is the size of the Hynes convention center. It's a full service church. Child-care, coffee bars, bible-study, community action. People are not stingy with their time. This is no I'll give you one hour of my valuable time. Nor are they stingy with their contributions. They were able to raise 24 million over three years not just for their facility but also for their social mission in the city and in a partnership with a town in South Africa.

And part of me was frankly jealous. I was thinking that there was so much enthusiasm for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. People are coming because they want to and not because they have to. The young people are excited about their part in the mission. Like those five thousand in the gospel today who are hungering for Jesus' words about the kingdom of God, week-by-week thousands are gathering to be energized by the Good News.

But coming from a Catholic tradition as I do, I was struck in the service by how we who were seated in the arena for the service were much more "audience" than active participants. The performers were on stage. Incredible musicians, preachers, motivational speakers. Yes, we would sing and sway and clap, like one would do at a rock concert but it was pretty clear that the "show" was in the hands of the performers not us.

I hope what I have described is not your experience of Catholic Liturgy because if it is we are all doing something wrong. What distinguishes our Eucharistic liturgy is what we do "together". Catholic liturgy is about the action of the whole community who gather as the body of Christ. Today's scriptures emphasize not just the words of Jesus but the actions that go with the words. He took bread, giving thanks, blessed, broke, poured, shared, gave. You hear it in Paul and you hear it in the Gospel. The Eucharist is about action. And it is primarily an action of Thanks-giving. Maybe it's better in the Spanish. "accion de gracias. Action of thanks. This is what is so dynamic about our Catholic worship. It's not just about the words. It's about the actions. It's not just about saying the words "this is my body, this is my blood" No, it's the action of speaking the words, the action of breaking the bread and pouring the wine and receiving the Eucharist.

And it's not all about the priest who performs those actions in the name of Christ. It's about us.
The Lord be with You. Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

That's the way the great Prayer of Thanksgiving begins. It's something we do together. It may be my voice for the most part. But it is we who are doing the praying! If you really listen to the words, you would be astounded by the number of times "we and our and us" are said. This is not I, mine, me" In a few minutes, when we pray the prayer, I'm going to emphasize the we's us, our so you get the point. But you may say there are so many words! It's not easy to pay attention to so many words. It's easier to drift into my own thoughts, prayers. You're right. Too many words. So let me give you a shorthand for praying the prayer with the priest.

Begin with thanks and praise (blessing God for all the gifts we receive, especially the gift of Jesus)

Spirit Action: Send your spirit on these gifts/ send your spirit on us

Remembering: the words of Jesus, the death and rising and promise to come again

Petitions: Asking for God's continued faithfulness

We finish with praise and with the Great Amen which is our affirmation of God's faithfulness in Jesus.

No finish to today's homily. Let's just continue our prayer so that together we may pray the great Prayer of Thanksgiving, our Eucharistic Prayer.

Por la iglesia, para que vivamos la Eucaristía, dando y compartiendo de nosotros mismos como Cristo se da de sí mismo continuamente a nosotros y para que todos recibamos el don de su vida

Por todos los que carecen de comida, para que escuchemos el desafío que Cristo nos da de "darles de comer" y abramos nuestros corazones a todos los que no tienen las necesidades básicas de vida.

Por todos los enfermos para que el poder del amor de Dios los ayude y los sane.

Por los tres jesuitas que fueron ordenados ayer y especialmente por Andy Downing que ha servido nuestra parroquia como diácono, para que su ministerio sea bendito, compartiendo la llamada de Cristo de amar y de servir.