

Solemnity of Corpus Christi (Body and Blood of Christ)

June 18, 2017



*O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament  
have left us a memorial of your Passion, grant us,  
we pray, so to revere the sacred mysteries  
of your Body and Blood  
that we may always experience in ourselves  
the fruits of your redemption.  
Who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*



Collect for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi

It is very appropriate that the last reflection I share on the Sunday readings before my retirement happens to be on the feast of Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of Christ. As I reflect on my ministry since I came to the UP, the Diocese of Marquette, on 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, 1968, it was the Feast of the Queenship with Mary. I had taken my first vows as a member the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary on August 17<sup>th</sup> at Loretto Abbey, the Motherhouse of the North American Branch. My cousin, Patrick Sullivan SJ, said our Mass and then he helped me begin my journey to the UP. He took me to Kenmore, a suburb of Buffalo, where I was responsible for selling the home where I had grown up. My younger sisters had moved into an apartment, and my sister Mary Clare was in the hospital when I left my family of origin's home and my sister Jeanie was paying attention to Mary Clare. All of this helped me see that we truly are the Body of Christ, interrelated in many ways.



On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, I started my journey for the nearly 24 hour bus ride to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan where I was assigned to teach at Loretto Catholic Central High School. This ride allowed me to reflect on what my novice mistress, Mother Mary Aloysius, had told me that I would never go into a place where I did not know anyone because our God would always be there. I learned this was more than true. Our God has been more than faithful to me over these forty-nine years.

I discovered that the first place I realized my membership as part of the Body of Christ was in the "math department" of the high school. Strangely, as our first reading for today's Mass (Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a) reminds us God constantly "gifts" us so we cannot claim great things happen under our own power but only through God. Not really wanting to be a teacher, there was not a whole lot women could do in the church except to be a teacher, a nurse or in someplaces, as a social worker. Therefore I entered a teaching community ending in God's good time, that the Catholic schools in the Sault

closed in 1970-71. Then the sisters were responsible for a very innovative program for religious formation of people in the Sault Deanery. Since the high school closed in January, I was responsible for faith formation from grade nine through adults. It is also in November 1971 where I decided to make my permanent covenant within my religious community. It was there where I publicly acknowledged that I was part of the Body of Christ within the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Then, too, I soon discovered that I did not have administrative skills, so I was determined to return to the metro Chicago area and return to teaching. The pastor at St. Mary's Parish was quite forward thinking and decided that a woman could offer a dimension to Parish ministry that he saw as having been missing over the years. I was then hired as the pastoral associate in 1973 and have served in that capacity at St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral, then at Holy Spirit in Menominee and finally here at St. Anne, Chassell and St. Albert the Great University Parish, Houghton.

In the Sault, I told the pastoral council that I would give it a "shot" but this has continued all these years. Once again I found that I was part of the Body of Christ in numerous ways. My family of origin was expanding as my younger sisters had both married and were having their children. Now, we are spread, coast to coast, with my nieces and nephews having children of their own. Over the years, I have been brought into many families where we "broke bread" together and raised a "cup of the blessing", giving us life.

Over the years of ministry I have had many "jobs" but always looking forward to how I could reflect the mystery of the Trinity. This has happened as living within the Body of Christ. Again, God has allowed me to relate in love, as a celibate woman, knowing that I belong to God alone. This happens, abiding in the presence of our God. In spite of all the "tasks" I believe the most important thing I have done is "to be present".

On that first vow day, I and the other sister in my group, Sister Claire Vandborg, decided that our ceremony prayer would be St. Ignatius of Loyola's "Suscipe" and our Feast would be the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity.

*Take Lord, and receive  
all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will,  
all that I have and possess.  
You have given all to me.  
To You, O Lord, I return it.  
All is Yours.  
Dispose of it wholly according to Your will.  
Give me Your love and Your grace, for this is sufficient for me.*

Praying this prayer regularly, and facing retirement, as I am divesting myself of years of accumulation, I realize all truly is gift. The books that my community has graciously allowed me to purchase, God-willing, will enhance other people's ministry, having faithfully living my vow of poverty. The yarn and patterns will allow the prayer shawl ministry to continue. The clothing that I have had, hopefully, will allow young women to see how to dress modestly and professionally.

Being a community that was founded in 1609 by Mary Ward, like our early women, I wear the "dress of the day". She and her early companions were quite mobile, preparing the people for the reception of the various sacraments. Hopefully I have been able to do that into today. In Mary Ward's world, the people labeled her and her companions "the galloping girls". My guess is I have been labeled as such also.



Mary Ward was ahead of her days and contrary to the decrees of the Council of Trent, she desired that her community would be governed by women. This governance continues into today as we work on consensus rather than a hierarchical that determines much by voting. Because "mission" is central to our lives, our ministry is supported by a prayer, having this ministry send us to prayer. Though we pray the Liturgy of the

Hours, most often, we pray it privately. Since the Eucharist is the "source summit of the Christian life", we pray within the Body of Christ, often within the local parishes.

Knowing that we are all sinful people, each of us receives the Sacrament of Reconciliation, meeting our merciful God on a regular basis. Bearing the infirmities of humanity, we reach out to receive the Anointing of the Sick. The Sacrament of Marriage and the Sacrament of Holy Orders are supported by me, and of course, other sisters.

The Diocese of Marquette is part of the fabric of my life. Again, I have served in many committees, attended many celebrations at St. Peter Cathedral and many other churches in our Diocese, each deepening my commitment as a member of the Body of Christ. In the essence, I feel as though the Upper Peninsula is a small town with a great deal of land between!

On November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1971, I took my final vows, at St. Mary's, sensing that that parish was my "home" parish. In July, 1980, I moved to Holy Spirit in Menominee where my sense of the Body of Christ expanded. There, on Labor Day Weekend, 1991, I closed the 25<sup>th</sup> year within IBVM with a celebration at Holy Spirit, bringing together my family of origin, members of my religious Community, friends from Sault Ste. Marie as well as people from Menominee and across the diocese.



In July, 2000, in obedience to the will of my religious community I moved to Loretto Wheaton to go into full-time leadership for four years. Within those years, we celebrated the culmination of years of work, reuniting with members our international community. This reunion allowed me to return to the Diocese of Marquette 2004 to begin ministry at St. Anne's and St. Al's. Over these thirteen years I have said that at St. Anne's I am young and tall and at St. Al's I am old and short. Since much of our ministry, as a religious community, is to work with women and children, I have said that my ministry at St. Al's is to teach our young men how to relate and deal with women.



These years have been filled with directed retreat ministry, the Wise Women Retreats, Campus Ministry retreats, Spring (and Summer) mission trips, prayer shawl ministry, the R(ite) of C(hristian) I(nitiation) of A(dults), faith formation, counseling, ministry to the sick, marriage preparations, coordinating chaplaincy program for UP Portage Health Services, serving college students within the CCM (Cooperative Campus

Ministry), praying with and for our community of faith, and most of all being present within the communities, the Body of Christ. Two years ago, I celebrated my 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee within the parishes. A prayer that marked this celebration is something I shared within the Body of Christ and I once again share.

*Father, I abandon myself into your hands;  
do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do, I thank you:  
I am ready for all, I accept all.  
Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures.  
I wish no more than this, O Lord.  
Into your hands I commend my soul;  
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,  
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,  
to surrender myself into your hands, without reserve,  
and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father.*

I leave the Diocese of Marquette on Sunday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, within IBVM associate, Frank Best, (who once lived in Hancock) from Holy Spirit, Menominee, driving a U-Haul truck to my new home. Sister Barb Nelson, a dear IBVM friend, who flew here on Friday, driving with me Northlake. Needless to say, a piece of my heart stays here.

*Sister Ellen Enright*