

OK, since I've missed you so much – I'm giving you a couple extra jokes today! Ready? Did you hear that NASA has launched several Holsteins into Earth orbit? It was the herd shot around the world.

So, these two vultures decided to fly to Florida on an airline. They got on board carrying six dead raccoons, and the flight attendant said, "I'm sorry, but there's a limit of 2 carrion per passenger."

I was in Mercy, Australia, and I was served tea made from the hair of a koala. "Made from the hair of a koala? You're kidding! How was that?" "Oh, it was awful. It was filled with koala's hair!" "Well, you know, the koala tea of mercy is not strained."

OK, one last one! A doctor liked to stop at a bar after work and have an almond daiquiri. One day, Dick the bartender ran out of almonds and used hickory nuts instead. The doctor took a sip and said, "Is this an almond daiquiri, Dick?" And Dick said, "No, it's a hickory daiquiri, Doc."

"Do this in remembrance of me." The Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ is a wonderful annual reminder of the importance of this command. It is also an opportunity to examine the rich heritage we share AS the Body of Christ, we who eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ. DOING THIS can take hold of our lives and change them. The daily Eucharist my parents took me to as a child call me to be here as a priest; DOING THIS calls couples together in a vocation of marriage, and DOING THIS nourishes the single, the widowed and teen on the day's journey through life. We DO THIS with words centuries old, set to music written perhaps but yesterday, or chanted in monastic style for a thousand years.

"Do this in remembrance of me." Was ever another command so obeyed? Think of all those innumerable millions of entirely obscure faithful men and women, every one with his or her own hopes and fears and joys and sorrows and loves – and sins and temptations and prayers – once every bit as vivid and alive as yours and mine are now. They have left not the slightest trace in this world, not even a name, but have passed to God utterly forgotten by humankind.

Yet each of them once believed and prayed as you and I believe and pray, and found life hard and grew slack and sinned and repented and fell again. Each of them worshipped at the Eucharist, ate and drank this sacred banquet, and found their thoughts wandering and tried again, and felt heavy and unresponsive and yet knew these things just as really and pathetically as you and I do. And ALL OF THEM are here with us each time we break this bread and drink this cup – a centuries old procession of sinners now gathered up into the communion of saints.

There is a little, ill-spelled, ill-carved rustic epitaph of the 4th century from Asia Minor which reads: "Here sleeps the blessed Chione, who has found Jerusalem -- for she prayed much." Not another word is known of Chione, apparently some peasant woman who lived in that now-vanished world of Christian Anatolia. But how lovely if all that should survive after 17 centuries were that she had prayed much, so that the neighbors who witnessed her life were sure she must have found the heavenly Jerusalem! What did the Sunday Eucharist in her village church every week for a life-time mean to the Blessed Chione – and to the millions like her then, and every year since? What does it mean to us? The stupendous quantity of the love of God which this ever repeated action has drawn from the obscure Christian multitudes through the centuries is in itself an overwhelming thought. And all of this – and all of them – comes to the altar with us every Sunday, comes to us who eat and drink the Body and Blood.

“DO this in remembrance of me” became embedded deep down in the life of the Catholic peoples, coloring all the daily life of the ordinary man and woman, marking their personal turning points, marriage, sickness, death and the rest, running through it year by year with the feasts and fasts and the rhythm of the Sundays, so that the action of the Eucharist became inextricably woven into the whole public history of the Western world. Today’s feast is a moment to pause, to remember, to reflect, and to be grateful for the rich blessing of the Eucharist in our lives. Don’t we all appreciate it so much more after having to be without it for so long during this pandemic? How many of you wept when you received the Eucharist in our communion services? And these first weeks back into church. How did we get through OUR trials? The same as those Catholic faithful through history. By DOING THIS in remembrance of Christ.

I close with words of the famous Benedictine monk-liturgist Dom Gregory Dix: “Do this in remembrance of me.” Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done, in every conceivable human need from infancy and before it to extreme old age and after it, from the pinnacles of earthly greatness to the refuge of fugitives in the caves and dens of the earth. People have found no better thing than this to do for kings at their crowning and for criminals going to the scaffold; for armies in triumph or for a bride and a groom in a little country church; for the proclamation of a dogma or for a good crop of wheat; for the wisdom of the Parliament of a mighty nation or for a sick old woman afraid to die; for a schoolboy sitting for an examination or for Columbus setting out to discover America; for the famine of whole provinces or for the soul of a dead lover; in thankfulness because my father did not die of pneumonia; because the Turk was at the gates of Vienna; for the settlement of a strike; for a son for a barren woman; for Captain so-and-so, wounded and prisoner of war; while the lions roared in the nearby amphitheatre; on the beach at Dunkirk; while the hiss of scythes in the thick of June grass came faintly through the windows of the church; tremulously, by an old monk on the 50th anniversary of his vows; furtively, by an exiled bishop who had hewn timber all day in a prison camp near Murmansk; gorgeously, for the canonization of St. Joan of Arc – we could fill many pages with the reasons why people have done this, and not tell a hundredth part of them. And best of all, week by week and month by month, on a hundred thousand successive Sundays, faithfully, unfailingly, across all the parishes of Christendom, we have done this to form the Corpus Christi, the Body of Christ, the common, holy, people of God. Happy Feast Day to YOU WHO ARE the Body of Christ – to me – and to the world. AMEN. (This entire homily is taken from and adapted from Dom Gregory Dix, THE SHAPE OF THE LITURGY, p. 743-745)