Corpus Christi: 6/11/23—9:30 and 11:30 AM

This homily is really two short homilies because I have two thoughts I’d like to share with you. The first is about these two chalices, and the second is about the condition called anorexia nervosa.

My first thought has to do with my two chalices which you see me use at Mass. Both of them are damaged. This olive wood chalice was given to me by the group on our last pilgrimage to the Holy Land which my friend Fr. Dennis Port and I led in 2017. The group bought this olive wood chalice at an olive wood store as a “thank you” gift to me. If you look closely, you will see that it has Leonardo Da Vinci’s Last Supper carved into the olive wood. It’s beautiful, and I treasure it, but it is damaged because it has a split in the olive wood. I’ve had this silver chalice ever since shortly after my ordination in 1974. It has a beaten silver surface to it—very beautiful but it too is damaged. When I was at Assumption Parish in O’Fallon in the early 1980s, it was stolen from the Church’s sacristy. The man who stole it took it to Warrenton where he tried to pawn it. The pawn shop owner thought there was something fishy about him trying to pawn a chalice so he called the police who arrested him and who returned this chalice to me, but it had a big dent in its side. The dent was repaired, but, whenever I pick it up, I think of that big dent. My reason for showing these two chalices to you is to point out how we all are like them. You and I are cracked. You and I are dented. You and I are damaged by our sins, and so we are unworthy to welcome the Body and Blood of Jesus into ourselves and into our lives. But yet despite how damaged we are, our God is so loving that he wants to enter our lives and to live in us any way. This truth is what we celebrate on this Feast of the Body and Blood of Jesus. What a great honor it is for us who are so spiritually cracked, dented, and damaged to know that our God wants to live in us. Again, this is the first of my two homilies.

The second homily is about anorexia. This is how Google describes anorexia: ***Anorexia nervosa is a psychiatric disease in which patients restrict their food intake relative to their energy requirements through eating less, exercising more, and/or purging food through laxatives and vomiting. Despite being severely underweight, they do not recognize it and have distorted body images.*** In other words, a person suffering from anorexia thinks that they are perfectly healthy when, in actuality, they are starving to death. Aren’t we living in a world and, more precisely, are living in a country where most of the people are suffering from spiritual anorexia, that is, living for values which ultimately are causing them to spiritually and morally starve to death? What we celebrate in the Mass and in our reception of the Eucharist is the fact that we have been given the antidote for spiritual anorexia nervosa: It’s Jesus. Jesus is the truest of true values; Jesus is the truest of true nourishment; Jesus, indeed the Bread of Life. Rather than criticizing and condemning those who are suffering from spiritual anorexia, those who think that they are healthy and prospering when really they are starving, we need to see them as suffering from a disease and treat them with kindness and love leading them, inviting them, to come to see Jesus as the truest of true values and as the truest of true nourishment, that is, to see Jesus the Bread of Life.

Putting both of these ideas together, it is only by remembering that we are spiritually cracked, dented, and damaged that we will be patient enough, kind enough, compassionate enough to show and to offer those who are suffering from spiritual anorexia the true Bread of Life. However, we must be very careful not to follow the path of those suffering from spiritual anorexia because spiritual anorexia is even more contagious than physical Covid 19.