

June 7, 2026—Corpus Christi Sunday

They called it “Bread from Heaven”. God promised that He would take care of His people Israel when they escaped slavery in Egypt. They cried out for bread, He responded with manna. Each morning, they woke up and found the ground covered with a thin, bread-like substance they gathered and ate as bread. It looked like it fell from heaven; they knew that it was the gift of their Heavenly Father—Bread from Heaven. In the First Reading, Moses recounted some of the blessings and miracles that God had worked on their 40-year journey to the Promised Land and at the top of the list was this Bread from Heaven. He **“fed you in the desert with manna, a food unknown to your fathers.”**

One of the many names we give to the Holy Eucharist is “Bread from Heaven.” The Old Testament manna was foreshadowing the gift Jesus gave to us at the Last Supper and continues to give to us in each Holy Mass. Just like any food, bread gives us strength of body and mind, it nourishes us and is necessary for life. It doesn’t take long for us to feel the effects of missing even one or two meals. We start to feel weak in mind and body; the stomach growls to remind us to eat! Jesus is necessary for our lives, for our spiritual health. What better way could He demonstrate this truth than by giving Himself to us under the form of food? The Eucharistic Jesus nourishes our souls and gives us eternal life.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12, St. Paul gave us the first written account of the institution of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper. It is most likely that this letter was written before the first of the Gospels. The Second Reading this Sunday was taken from the chapter before and gives us another insight into the meaning of the Holy Eucharist as Holy Food. He wrote: **“The bread we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”**

A loaf of bread is made up of many grains of wheat, is ground into flour and is baked into one loaf. St. Paul uses it as a symbol for the unity that God wants us to have in the Church. We, though many different people with our own gifts and talents, with our own individual background and temperament come together in faith and worship, especially the Holy Mass, to make up one Body, the Church. The Holy Eucharist, which is Jesus truly present is not only a symbol of unity but actually brings it about. When we receive Holy Communion in faith, we are united to one another more deeply than any effort we could make on our own.

Matthew, Mark and Luke record the institution of the Holy Eucharist in their Last Supper accounts, but St. John does not. John's Gospel was the last of the Gospels to be written and he wanted to make known other things that happened at the Last Supper and, after all, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass had been celebrated for decades, everyone knew the words of Jesus from the Last Supper. Instead, John wrote chapter 6. We heard the climax from that chapter in the Gospel this Sunday. Remember, it began with the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fish, then the manna from the Old Testament was brought up and Jesus began to say things like **"I am the bread which came down from heaven."** Throughout the chapter, He makes the point that you cannot accept this doctrine, except by faith which comes from God the Father.

When the Jews listening to Him do not accept His teaching, Jesus doesn't back down, like a crafty politician trying to gain votes, He doubles down! He said, **"Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my Blood is true drink."**

Every day when I come into the Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for the first time, I say: "Jesus, I believe in You, help my unbelief!" I can look back over my 44 years of priesthood and see growth in my understanding and devotion—I can also look back at the beginning of my priesthood and see how little I understood this great Mystery of faith! Let's ask the Lord for an increase of faith when we receive Holy Communion in each Holy Mass and remember Who comes to us when we receive the Bread of Life, the Bread from Heaven.

Just a few words about the statue of St. Michael at the outdoor shrine. The words on his shield are: **"Quis ut Deus"**, meaning "Who is like God". That is the meaning of the name Michael; it is not a question, it is a statement. Lucifer rebelled against God in heaven with about a third of the angels, thinking that he could take the place of God. Michael fought back, saying who is like God, meaning, no one is like God! Also, our statue has St. Michael holding his sword upright, which signifies he is on guard and ready for battle. His face shows resolution and I would even say majesty. I will bless the statue of St. Michael during our Corpus Christi procession. We need him and all the holy angels to defend us and give us courage and resolution in the battle that still goes on with the devil and his fallen angels. St. Michael, pray for us!

