

The last time I stood here was Easter Sunday, when we celebrated the paschal mystery: from death to new life. The Resurrection is the ultimate example of that pattern, but we live this death-to-life cycle throughout our lives. For example:

Our graduates this weekend are dying to a routine they knew, and are either entering the workforce or a different kind of education experience – new life. Or when you get married, it's first a funeral to your independent lifestyle as a single person – and then a celebration of new life. Or like when I changed jobs, relocating to different states – I moved from death to life: goodbye to friendships at my church, at work and elsewhere, and to a job I knew and was comfortable with – but new life followed.

What we celebrate today, *Corpus Christi*, Latin for “the Body of Christ,” the Eucharist, is a sacrament of dying and new life. It's about God swallowing us into his wholeness: we die to our egos so that God can fill us with Christ, with Christ's outlook and Christ's heart, so our personalities, our souls, can be at their best.

The Eucharist is conversion therapy. It helps our ego die, so Christ can fill in the space. We keep repeating the Eucharist until we get it right, either now or at the end. In communion we receive the death of Christ so that we can have his new life. With his grace and help we surrender our “selves,” our egos, so that Christ can reprogram us, and live in us, so God can give us everlasting joy in immortality.

One of my professors summed all this up with a saying: Die now – before it's too late. ... He's speaking about our egos, what we're holding onto, the part of us that's really responsible for all of our sins. We receive communion with Christ each week to continue to help us die to our egos, to make more and more space in us that Christ can fill, so we become more and more like Christ, who is the perfect Adam and Eve, the way God intended for us to be, so we can be fully human.

Rev. Martin Luther King understood this. When he launched the Civil Rights Movement, he'd meet with the protestors before the marches began, and he told them that their egos had to die first, before they marched, so that when they were screamed at, cursed, spit on, and physically attacked, they would not return evil for evil. Their egos had to die before they marched, so Christ would live in them.

The early Christians believed that when they gathered to thank God the Father for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, that Christ was actually in the room with them, in a very special way. He was really present, and in the bread and wine they consumed He was intimately present within them. We continue to believe that and celebrate it.

The Eucharist is first the sacrament of death, and then the sacrament of life. The Good News is that when we face those dying moments in our lives, we don't do it alone. It doesn't all fall on our shoulders like it does for unbelievers, because when we receive the Eucharist we know Christ lives in us, loves us, cares about us, and is with us when we live through those daily deaths.

The challenge for us is to die to our egos, so we can let Christ's Spirit gradually fill us, until we become fully Christlike – either in this life, or the next. Our ego has to die. Expectations, senses of entitlement, have to die. Envy, jealousy, greed, pride have to die. For each one of us, it's a long journey of dying to self because our egos are so strong, so stubborn.

Let's give Christ some room.

Fr. John Ozella, , June 3, 2018, The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ