



CORPUS CHRISTI

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault
(Fontgombault, June 19th, 2025)

*Ecclesiae tuæ, quæsumus, Domine, unitatis et pacis propitius
dona concede: quæ sub oblatiis muneribus mystice designantur.*

In Thy mercy, we beseech Thee, O Lord, grant to Thy Church
the gifts of unity and peace, which are mystically
shown forth in the offerings we make to Thee.

(Secret of the Mass)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
My dearly beloved Sons,

ONE OF THE MOST well-known dreams of St. John Bosco is called the dream of the two pillars, or the dream of the three white things. Don Bosco sees the sea, and on it an army in battle array, a multitude of ships full of weapons. The armada is preparing to assault a magnificent vessel, the flagship of a numerous fleet. A tempest is favouring the attacking forces.

Suddenly two columns appear, towering over the waves. The greater one is crowned with a luminous host, bearing the words “Salvation of the faithful.” The other one is crowned with a statue of the Blessed Virgin, with a rosary on her arm, and bearing the words “*Auxilium christianorum*, Help of Christians.” On the base of the two columns, there are anchors, hooks, and chains.

Then there appears on the prow of the flagship a man, the commander. The flagship is the Church. The commander is

the Pope. At the height of the tempest he is trying to maintain the ship between the two columns.

Whatever damage the fleet may sustain, the columns remain, landmarks and help. A mysterious wind blows from them and repairs the damage.

Suddenly, the Pope is struck and falls down. Another one takes his place, and firmly moors the prow of the flagship to the column bearing the host, and her stern to that bearing the Blessed Virgin. The other vessels of the fleet come and are moored on the two columns. A great peace is now reigning on the sea.

This peace, as well as the gift of the unity of the Church, are mentioned in the secret of the Mass, composed by St. Thomas Aquinas, as a fruit of the Blessed Eucharist, according to a doctrine which is constant in the Angelic Doctor's teaching, after St. Paul and the Fathers of the Church.

Thus, in the first question of the treatise devoted to the Eucharist, St. Thomas relies on the authority of St. Paul:

a. 1 Co 10:17. Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.^a

and he concludes:

b. S. Th., III^a, q. 73, a. 2, sed contra. From which it is clear that the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church's unity.^b

And towards the end of his treatise, he takes up the same idea:

c. S. Th., III^a, q. 83, a. 4, c. The people is prepared by the peace which is given with the words, "Lamb of God," because this is the sacrament of unity and peace.^c

Many ancient texts have expounded this idea, such as the *Didache*:

d. *Didache*, IX, 4. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom.^d

And St. Augustine comments on today's gospel:

Believers know the body of Christ, if they neglect not to be the body of Christ. [...] Does thy spirit live of thy body, or thy body of thy spirit? [...] My body, of course, lives by my spirit. Wouldst thou then also live by the Spirit of Christ? Be in the body of Christ. [...] The body of Christ cannot live but by the Spirit of Christ. For this reason, the Apostle Paul, expounding this bread, says: "One bread, we being many are one body." O mystery of piety! O sign of unity! O bond of charity! He that would live has where to live, has whence to live. Let him draw near, let him believe; let him be embodied, that he may be made to live. Let him not shrink from the compact of members; let him not be a rotten member that deserves to be cut off; let him not be a deformed member whereof to be ashamed; let him be a fair, fit, and sound member; let him cleave to the body, live for God by God: now let him labour on earth, that hereafter he may reign in heaven.^e

e. *Tract. in Joann.*,
XXVI, 13 (PL 35:1612).

In the secret of the Mass, we thus beseech God to grant us the gifts of unity and peace, a strengthening of the ecclesial charity secured by the Eucharist. The text adds that these gifts are "mystically shown forth in the offerings."

The meaning of the word "mystically" (*mystice*) is very rich. It encompasses the ancient meaning of a sacramental mystery, a reality that allows us to reach the invisible through the visible, in the present instance the species which are going to be consecrated to contain Christ "in a state of victimhood." Pius XII emphasised the fact that "the separation of the symbols [*the bread as distinct from the wine*] shows clearly that Jesus Christ is in a state of victimhood."^f

f. *Mediator Dei*, n. 70.

Since the monk Dionysius the Areopagite (Syria, end of the 5th century) the word "mystic" has acquired a new meaning, more personal, more intimate, that of an impetus of love towards God, seized under the veil of symbols.^g

g. Cf. BENEDICT XVI,
General Audience,
May 14, 2008.

Thus the offertory, concluded by the secret, already invites us to unite to the offerings on the altar our joys and hardships, our whole life offered together with them, it invites us to associate ourselves with Christ Who brings peace and unity to His Church, as taught by the *Catechism*:

h. CCC, n. 1368.

The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with His total offering, and so acquire a new value.^h

The offering of the faithful will be sealed during the consecration, in the *Amen* of the *Per ipsum*, and in many other ritual expressions.

Through his motto, Pope Leo also evokes this unity: “*In illo uno, unum* — In the One, we are one.” If we make this motto our own, we shall necessarily become united with the whole body of the Church, and transformed into makers of peace and unity.

Mary, whom we like to invoke with the title of “*Auxilium christianorum*, Help of Christians,” comes to us bearing her Son, and offering Him to us. She always remains our Mother.

On this day of Corpus Christi, let us give thanks to God, the author of all gifts, for these three white things, and let us willingly receive these gifts.

Amen, Alleluia.

