

CORPUS CHRISTI

St. Maximilian Kolbe volunteered to be executed in the place of another in the concentration camps of World War II. His story stirs something deep inside us about living for others and even giving our most precious possession, our life, for them.

Lord, in your Eucharist, we honor your heroic self-sacrificing love for us. You come to us in bread and wine, bread that nourishes our hunger, bread that we share in friendship, bread that is broken, wine for our joy. These are simple, everyday gifts, Lord. We thank you for them, because through them, you show us that you are not far away, or aloof. You are in the ordinary elements of life. We recognize you in the breaking of the bread, as the apostles did on the road to Emmaus. It is your vulnerable, simple, broken presence, your nourishing and forgiving presence. In your meal with the sinner, Mary Magdalene, she felt forgiveness. In your meal with the hated tax collector, he felt accepted and graced. In your meal with the 5,000, they felt your overflowing generosity and freedom from hunger. In your Passover meal, they felt the freeing and protecting hand of God, Our Father. All these meals are rolled into one in the Eucharist. They speak to us of your presence among us. They speak of your sacrifice. Above all, they speak of your love. The break of the Eucharist is not bread until the grains of wheat are crushed. The wine is not wine until it is poured out from our grapes. So also, the unspeakable and tender love of God cost him dearly. It cost him the broken and crushed body of his Son. He has made a covenant of love with us and that covenant will never be withdrawn. His Eucharist is a memorial of His love for us. It is a pledge that we will be with him one day in Paradise. It is our way of saying thanks, our way of adoring our Father in Heaven, like the little child who cannot speak but babbles off sounds of love to his parents anyhow. Lord, help us to appreciate your loving presence among us. Help us to remember that we are one bread. Help us to be a gift to each other; for it would be hypocritical of us to celebrate the Eucharist in our churches and then, not live it in our daily lives. Amen.

Death - Eucharist

Father, we are here because of death. We have just celebrated the death of Jesus whom you love with an everlasting love. We are here because of death, the death of a mother and brother who are deeply loved. We are here because of the many deaths - the deaths of those who were near to us and close to us. We are here

because of our own death; the many deaths in our lives, and our own actual death. Because here at Eucharist, where we take bread and wine, Body and Blood, we can stare death straight in the face. We can feel its cold and fearful reality, disintegration, loss, grief, an anchor gone loose in our lives, heartbreak, and loneliness. Our heart can be heavy as lead, our hands clammy and lifeless, our sense of the goodness and kindness of life devastated, our future clouded with fear, but we have hope; we see a light. We touch a peace that is deep within, as if at the center of the ocean, where all around there is turmoil and storm and restlessness. We can stare it straight in the face because Jesus, the dear Lord of flesh and blood did. He is now Risen Lord - "death, where is your sting?" Death, if we can stare you straight in the face, even accept you as a friend, then we will be free to live life. Jesus Savior, fully man, for you death was very real. You had no previous guarantee that it would work out alright. You, who reprimanded your Apostles for lack of faith in the boat ("why are you fearful, O you of little faith?") were terrorized with an awful fear as death approached. It was so terrifying that your body revolted and you sweated blood. You felt the aloneness of death ("Can you not watch one hour with me?"). You felt the utter disintegration of your person as you hung on a cruel cross amidst a rejecting and hostile crowd. Finally, the agony and pain was so great that you wondered if even your own Father had rejected you ("My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"). You know the grief, the pain, the terror, Father, because you felt them in your Son, Jesus. You know the tears because Jesus was overcome with them when His friend Lazarus died. You know the sense of being all alone in the world - He felt that in the clammy hands of the widow of Naim.

We celebrate death here - the death of Jesus. Yet, it speaks to us of life - nourishing, lifegiving bread, wine for joy. Blood that we need for the veins of our body; blood for his heart that beats with love. Body - your body that died, but is now glorious and alive, vibrant and beaming. Your body that we are all part of so that we might live forever. Your word that is spoken and gives life to our minds and souls. We touch in a greeting of peace, that touch that is lifegiving; the touch that reminds us that even our grief is a sign of love. The touch that is our pledge that we understand and live Eucharist - that we too are willing to die, to die to selfishness and self-seeking in order to live for you and each other. Your death brought life to

the world; You love is stronger than death. You spoke often of death, Lord, - "Unless the grain of wheat fall into the ground and dies it remains only a grain of wheat." "Take up your cross..." "The man who saves his life will lose it" - but it was always in the context of growth and new life. It was never death as an end in itself ("God did not make death." Wis. 1:13). You have given us nature as a great teacher of what you mean. It reassures us. We need that when we meet death, the death of a loved one, or the many deaths we have to die if we are to live and grow as you want us to. We need patience, we need to wait for God's good growth; we need to listen to what is happening. Patience is so hard at a time like this when our life is devastated and uprooted.

If we become impatient or dig into the ground all we see is a rotting blob where the seed was sown. We may dig it up in our impatience and ruin all the growth; even too much direct sunlight at this time will destroy the growing seed. It needs the death, the darkness of the earth, the winter.

These times of death are very brittle moments, Lord. May your death and resurrection be our anchor and hope then. Give us the faith to face the deaths that are so essential. Give us the hope that only special friends can bring as they walk with us in those fragile times. Give us the love that conquers all death. Give us the new life that makes it all so eternally worthwhile and wipes away the pain. Thank you, Lord, for Eucharist; it gives meaning to death, yours and ours.