

I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS
Matt. 28, 20

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Corpus Christi, the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ celebrates Christ among us in the Eucharist and within us, the community of the baptized. These readings place us squarely before two breakthrough covenants that God made with his chosen



people in ages past that endure to this day. In the Exodus covenant, through Moses God calls a people to be his own, to hear his word and live according to his law. For the people, the law was a gift, they knew what they had to do. They responded enthusiastically: *All that the Lord has said we will do*. With those words, the covenant was sealed. The chosen people have lived by that covenant ever since. At his Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus shared the bread and wine of a new covenant with them. In his gospel, Luke adds the mandate, *Do this in memory of me*. For 21 centuries Christians, gathered at Eucharist have celebrated this sacred meal.

Recently, Pope Francis sent a letter to the 1.2 billion Catholics throughout the world on living our covenant. His *modest goal was to re-propose the call to holiness in a practical way for our own time with all its risks, challenges, and opportunities*. He reminds us that *the Lord has chosen each and every one of us ‘to be holy and blameless before him in love’* and describes the following of Christ, the path to holiness, as *a way of life* emphasizing that *this call comes to us with baptism*.

For me this letter was like finding a treasure. I share just two points in it for your consideration. First, the emphasis on the call to holiness as *practical, demanding and accessible to all*. As the Pope Francis expresses it, *we are called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we are*. He goes on to note that Jesus explained *what it means to be holy when he gave us the beatitudes* which are *the Christian’s identity card*. The Pope adds that we are called to lives of service to others – the hungry, the thirsty, those who are sick, homeless, or in prison (Matt.25, 35ff.).

The second point made me smile, its title: *The Saints Next Door*. Pope Francis urges us to be *spurred on by the signs of holiness that the Lord shows through the humblest members of God’s people*. Who are they? I opened my eyes and, lo and behold, there they were in parishioners who day by day, year after year work in interfaith collaboration to feed the hungry of the area at the *Welcome In*. I see them in the homes of those who take care of a chronically ill or a handicapped member of their families. They are present in their work places where others see the impact of gospel

values like truth, justice, and respect for others, and in the volunteer services of so many others. Think about people you know. Who are the *saints next door* you recognize?

The feast of Corpus Christi reminds us that personally and together we are the Body of Christ. The challenge: to use our God-given gifts and talents so that the kingdom of God will spread in these troubled times. One of the hymns we sing together says it well - *We are many parts, we are all one body, and the gifts we have, we've been given to share. May the Spirit of Love make us one in deed; One the love that we share, one our hope in despair, one the cross that we bear. (Marty Haugen)*