

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The word “FAMILY” immediately conjures up all kinds of emotions within us; happiness as we think of those we love; sadness as we remember our beloved departed; safe and secure among those we find acceptance; sorrow, or even hurt, or anger where we have experienced the sting of rejection. FAMILY can most simply be defined as a community of persons bound together by blood, marriage, or adoption. Then, there are extended families and blended families that include persons who join the FAMILY through friendship or necessity. However, the members of a FAMILY each enjoys his or her own unique individuality, which surely make for some interesting differences within families. For instance, my oldest sister and I are convinced that our other two sisters must be aliens who somehow or other found their way into our Mother’s womb, since they are so different from us in their thinking and life styles.

Last week, however, we celebrated a truly unique family, the FAMILY OF GOD, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, individual persons, yes, but who share the same substance. We, on the other hand, maintain our individual substances, which though in same ways are similar, are also vastly different.

Now, this Family, the Family of God, has invited us to become members of their Family, through adoption in Christ Jesus. That adoption is formalized and made effective in what we call the Sacrament of Baptism, which we will celebrate here today for five children born into our Church Family, one at St. Malachy’s and four at Our Lady of Consolation.

God struggles, as we struggle, to keep His Family together. How does He do it? How do we do it? I don’t know about you and your families, but I know that in our family, we do it by coming together as often as possible to share a meal. I suspect these families whose children will be baptized today will shortly share in a meal together to strengthen the bonds of love and friendship.

Yesterday, we celebrated a wedding here between two wonderful, beautiful young people. In their marital covenant, they blended their individual families into one, and sealed it with a great feast to draw their families and friends closer to them and to each other.

So it is that God has chosen to draw all of us closer to Himself and to each other by inviting us to a feast. In the Old Testament we read how he provided “bread from heaven” manna, which sustained His chosen people for forty years in the desert. In Christ Jesus, He provides the feast of his very own life in the Body and Blood which will sustain us for all eternity.

It is that which we celebrate today, the Feast above all Feasts, the Body and Blood of Christ. The food and drink that God offers at this Feast is not made of elements from outside Himself. It is, rather, His very own flesh and blood, that makes us truly one with Him. But, not only that! This sacred meal also binds us to one another, since, as St. Paul tells us today, we are all partakers in the Body and Blood of Christ, “we, though many, are one body.”

In practical terms, what does that mean? Well, for openers, it means that we all accept responsibility, with these parents and godparents, to raise up the children who will be baptized this day to take their rightful place in the Family of God. We do that by providing religious education to assist these parents and godparents in teaching their children the ways of God and the ways to live their lives in God. We do it by providing the good example of our own lives lived in God. We do it by sharing generously of our sustenance, not just of our excess, in terms of our time, our talents, and our treasure, that God’s Kingdom may come to be here on earth as it is in heaven.

This Sacred Meal, this Eucharist, gives us the strength, the dynamism, the burst of energy we need to live out the Lord’s command to become “my flesh for the life of the world.

St. Teresa of Avila possibly said it best, “Christ has no body, but yours; no hands, but yours; no feet but yours. You are the eyes through which Christ’s compassion looks out on the world.”

We can achieve so little as individuals, but because we are partakers in the one loaf, we become one Body, His Body, which has the power to save everybody, not just for a moment, but for all eternity. In a few moments, we will have eaten of His Body and drunk of His Blood, which will have not only sustained us, but empowered us, to go forth from this place to “be bread” for the world.