

# Homily by Deacon Jim Olshefski

## Solemnity of the Body & Blood of Jesus (Corpus Christi)

### June 7, 2026

Leonardo da Vinci, of the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, was a painter—most famous for painting the Mona Lisa and The Last Supper. But he was also a scientist, mathematician, engineer, inventor, sculptor, architect, botanist, musician and writer. Leonardo knew a lot about a lot; a true Renaissance Man. I, on the other hand, consider myself to be a generalist, a “Jack-of-all-trades; but master-of-none,” who knows a little about a lot; a good man to have on your trivia team. I even think that I would have been a decent contestant on the game show, *Jeopardy*, but not nearly as good as James Holzhauer, one of the all-time Jeopardy greats, who would frequently bet everything on a Daily Double, with his now-famous phrase of “all-in!”

In today’s gospel, Jesus went “all-in” when he responded to the Jews who questioned “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Jesus replied, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.”

With those opening words, “Amen, amen...” Jesus is, to use another modern phrase, “doubling down.” He’s telling the crowd that he isn’t speaking metaphorically; rather, he’s telling them that what follows is an undeniable, foundational reality that requires absolute faith. But there was little that was more theologically problematic and disgusting, even repugnant, for first-century Jews than the drinking of blood. (Dt 12:16) Therefore, we subsequently hear in John’s Gospel that “As a result of this [teaching], many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.” (Jn 6:66) This is the only instance in the Gospels where disciples left Jesus in such numbers and it’s the only break over a point of doctrine.

This doctrine, which we know as “the Real Presence,” continues to be a source of division among Christians, even to this day! According to recent polls, a significant minority of Catholics do NOT believe in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Which is why, in 2022, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) launched a two-year National Eucharistic Revival culminating in the 10<sup>th</sup> National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis in 2024.

I remember watching videos of the various speakers at the Congress. Two were particularly memorable:

The first was Bishop Robert Barron, whose *Word On Fire Ministry* is particularly effective in evangelizing the Catholic faith. (In fact, the Cathedral’s adult faith formation program is currently screening the WOF series, *Catholicism*.) Bishop Barron, at the start of his talk, feigned anxiety when he discovered that he was scheduled to speak immediately following Jesus—that is, Jonathan Roumy, who portrays Jesus in the wildly successful series, *The Chosen*. The bishop’s comment led me to subsequently watch the video of Jonathan Roumy’s talk. Most memorable from that video was the t-shirt that he wore which bore a quote from the famous and devout Catholic novelist and short story writer, Flannery O’Connor.

The backstory of that quote is set at a fashionable dinner party in New York City. One of the other guests, making small talk and knowing that Flannery was Catholic, said that she admired some things about Flannery’s Catholic faith. For instance, she said, “The Eucharist: “This is my body.” That’s a beautiful symbol, but of course you don’t take that literally.” Flannery’s response was “Well, if it’s a symbol, to hell with it,” which was the quote on Jonathan Roumy’s shirt. That pretty much sums up my sentiment: The Eucharist is NOT a symbol; it’s the real body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus.

We heard Jesus say in the Gospel: “The one who feeds on me will have life, [that is, eternal life,] because of me.” When we receive the Eucharist, his life is really in us because we really feed on him and as the old adage says “we are what we eat.”

Now a brief postscript:

As our nation approaches its 250th anniversary, the USCCB has initiated a National Eucharistic Pilgrimage which seeks to lift our Lord high, so that we might truly become one nation under God. The 2026 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, entitled ***One Nation Under God***, is an invitation to intercede for unity, healing, and renewal in our country through our Eucharistic faith. Fr. Paul identified resources in his weekly letter and we have flyers at the exits that all can utilize to join our American bishops as they, on this **Thursday, June 11, 2026, consecrate our country to the Sacred Heart of Jesus**. This historic event—marking the first time the entire nation has been placed under the protection of the Sacred Heart—takes place during the bishop’s Spring Plenary Assembly in Orlando, Florida. Please support our bishops with your prayers as they gather in Orlando.