

- There is a story told about the zoo in Baltimore. A number of years ago it was famed for its gorilla. Unfortunately, one day, the gorilla died. It was very sad, very tragic.
 - And it just so happened that, at the same time the gorilla died, there was a man who had come to the zoo looking for a job. He really needed one and had looked and looked but no luck.
 - So the zookeeper got the idea that he would find a gorilla suit and dress the man up. It would only be a few weeks until they got a replacement. The guy could stay around the back of the gorilla cage, with no one the wiser.
 - So, reluctantly, the man put on the gorilla suit because he really needed the job. At first, he found it pretty boring, just hanging around the back of the cage.
 - He soon realized that it did not have to be so, he got more adventurous, doing tricks, acting like Magilla. Soon people started watching, crowds gathered. Kids were raptured. Excited adults even threw bananas.
 - The guy got more and more pumped, started using the bars in the cage to swing around. He got more and more adept, going higher and higher until one day, he said: “That’s it. I’m going for the triple spin.”
 - He jumped on those bars with a vengeance. The crowd LOVED it. Went around once. Cheers. Twice! The people went wild and then...all of a sudden, just as he was about to do the unthinkable third spin...he lost his grip.
 - He flew up into the air, over the fence, right into the next cage. To his horror, he realized that he had landed in the lion’s cage. Aghast, he shuddered as the lion woke up, and slowly begin to move towards him.
 - At this point, he lost his composure. He jumped up and started to scream “Help!! Help!! I’m not a gorilla, I’m a man.”
 - The lion kept approaching until he felt the breath of the lion on his neck. But then he heard a voice, a voice said very quietly, “Zip it you fool, or we’ll both lose our jobs!”
- With the Church around the world, we celebrate the Feast of *Corpus Christi*, Latin for the Body (and Blood) of (Jesus) Christ. This feast and today’s readings remind us that this great gift of the Eucharist is given to us both as a challenge and a promise.
 - Jesus doesn’t make it easy for those who hear Him. They are repulsed and offended at His words.
 - Even when they begin to quarrel, Jesus insists on describing the eating and drinking of His flesh and blood in starkly literal terms.
 - Four times in this short Gospel alone, Jesus uses a word which translated from the Greek refers to a crude kind of eating: gnawing or ripping apart (see John 6:54,56,57,58).
 - Jesus is testing their faith in His Word, as today’s First Reading describes God testing Israel in the desert.
 - The heavenly manna was not given to satisfy the Israelites’ hunger, as Moses explains.
 - It was given to show them that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.
- In Jesus, “the living Father” has given us His Word come down from heaven, made flesh for the life of the world.
 - In the Eucharist we are made one flesh with Christ.
 - We have His life in us; we have our life because of Him. This is what Paul means He calls the Eucharist a “participation” in Christ’s body and blood.

- We share in this sacrament God's divine nature, we become what we receive: God Himself.
- And that brings us back to our gorilla. It's more than a funny story, and it leads to an immediate question.
 - What makes a gorilla a gorilla? Or more importantly, what is the essence of something? Is it what's on the outside or what in the inside?
 - Now, those of you are rather adept would say, well, if it's on the inside then, it would also somehow be on the outside. Even if it's not visible, it will make itself felt.
 - But what if it's only on the outside? What if it's just a costume? That can be removed when the going gets tough?
 - You're probably realizing that this story somehow points out the difference in the Eucharist between what I see and taste and feel and what our faith tells us is the reality
 - My senses tell me that it is bread and wine but it is NOT.
 - The Eucharist is the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. It may look like bread and taste like wine or bread like bread and spill like wine but it is not bread and it is not wine.
 - It's Jesus Christ, no less real, no less present than when He walked the earth. Different? Obviously, but still Jesus.
 - But there's something more in that analogy of our gorilla than comparing the reality of the Eucharist with the outward appearance.
- In that story, it is completely obvious neither the gorilla nor the lion are real. They may look like it from a distance but they are not.
 - They are merely playing a role, a role which ceases when the zoo closes at night. They take off their costumes and go home.
 - Nothing more to it than that. They are changing only the outward appearance and can easily shed the costume when the going gets tough, when the lion is breathing down the neck.
- But the challenge and promise of the Eucharist is that it is different, so much more.
 - The Eucharist is not merely a costume that we put on to change our appearance, not merely something we do to feel better about ourselves: take a break from the hustle and bustle, give God some time, throw something in the basket and then go back to the business of our lives.
 - NO. The Eucharist is not just **NOT SOMETHING WE DO**; the Eucharist is **WHO WE ARE**, at least who God wants us to be.
 - Jesus knew his disciples would struggle and need help when they experienced the Cross, first His and then their own. That's why, at the Last Supper, on the night before He died, he gave them His Body and Blood, to strengthen them, a way He could be present to them in suffering, in their difficulties, in their challenges.
 - And it is no different for us. We re-present at EVERY MASS what Jesus did at the Last Supper, using His words. It's not me who transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ; it is Christ Himself. God uses my voice, my hands to speak, to elevate but it's Christ who acts. I'm merely a stand in.
 - Christ wants to give us Himself, wants to be in Communion with us, no less really, no less profoundly than He did with His disciples that night before He died. He wants us to know He is close to us as we experience the cross, the darkness and evil in our hearts and lives.

- And it is Christ who says at the end of each re-presentation of the Last Supper: *Do this in memory of Me*. Jesus is not merely speaking about what he did that night but about everything He did, the culmination of which is His gift of Himself, first sacramentally in the Eucharist and then from the Cross.
 - Imitating the sacrifice of Christ, this complete handing over of myself, my will, my wants, my desires, even my suffering and failings, is what it means to be a Christian, to be the Body of Christ.
 - I am called to be out in the world what I receive here from this altar: the Body of Christ is not about me.
 - Receiving the Body of Christ is about becoming Christ, fully realizing every day the meaning of the prayer He taught us: YOUR Kingdom come, YOUR will be done. NOT mine, His. It is not about me. It is about God and God's will about doing what God asks even and especially when it is tough, when the lion is breathing down our neck.
 - The Body of Christ means we sacrifice, that we live beyond our comfort zone, that we give without counting the cost, that reach out to others even and especially when it is difficult and inconvenient.
 - That's the challenge. That's the Body of Christ that we are called to become.
- But the Eucharist is a comfort, a promise that we do not do this alone, that Christ who came to share the Father's love, who came to bring Communion is closer than we could ever imagine, helping us to be supportive of and be supported by one another.
 - That promise, that warmth, that support is absolutely an essential part of what this community is called to be as the Body of Christ.
 - We are called to receive people, to invite people, to share with all people the promise and the comfort of Christ. We are called to accept them as Christ has accepted us, to love and value as they are, just as Christ loves and values us as we are.
 - This is what it means to have and to be an inviting community, extending an invitation, not just to be like us but to come as they are, not just for Mass but every aspect of our community, not only for Sunday but for every day of the week, not only for religion but every quality of life.
 - The Body of Christ, this community is not a roadside attraction for sightseers but a filling station for those journeying to salvation; not a rest home coddling the weak but a hospital curing the sick, pumping each one up, prepping each, focusing each on the other to go back out and share the Christ received, the Christ each is called to be.
- This is the mystery of the faith that Jesus asks us to believe. And He gives us His promise: that sharing in His Body, both at this altar and also in this world, we too will be raised up on the last day. And that's no monkey trick!