

This was work that I completed for the Diocese of Charleston in my role as Public Relations Specialist. These are homily outlines, not full homilies; they were written to give priests a set of talking points and reference material to draw from and develop in their own words.

Homily Helps

A monthly liturgical toolkit written for parish clergy and communications staff.

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

- This solemnity is a celebration of the Real Presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ, within the Eucharist.
- As Catholics, we believe in transubstantiation, when the consecrated host and the wine become the actual body and blood of Christ.
- This miracle has been doubted and debated by many people since Jesus instituted it at the Last Supper.
- Many of our Protestant brothers and sisters believe the presence of our Lord is merely symbolic.
- The Real Presence is easy to doubt as the outward characteristics of the host remain the same. It is human to doubt.
- Corpus Christi allows us to celebrate our faith and knowledge of Jesus' presence with us physically.
- The original feast was established by Pope Urban IV in the 13th century after officially recognizing a true eucharistic miracle. At a church in Bolsena, Italy, during a regular Sunday Mass, the consecrated host began to bleed.
- It is not the only time something like this has happened; 107 eucharistic miracles are officially recognized by the Church.
- Today, as we prepare to receive Communion, let's remember that we are in the presence of God, and recall the words of Christ in the Gospel of John: "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" (Jn 6:54-55).

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

- The Sacred Heart of Jesus symbolizes his immense love and compassion for humanity and his desire to be in communion with each of us.
- It also represents his human incarnation.
- In the 12th century, Christ appeared to a Benedictine nun in Belgium, now St. Lutgardis, and offered her whatever grace or blessing she desired. She asked for an understanding of Latin and was immediately flooded with knowledge. She still felt an emptiness inside, so she returned to the Lord and asked that he take the blessing back, asking to have his heart instead. Christ replied, "You want my heart? It is I who wants your heart."
- While he may not physically show up in our day-to-day lives (apart from in the Eucharist), Jesus calls us to a relationship with him where we embrace his most Sacred Heart, filled with love.
- "And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ez 36:26).
- "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).

- Further reading: the 12 promises of the Sacred Heart, available on EWTN's website.

Father's Day

- We often look to Christ's father on earth, St. Joseph, as a perfect model of fatherhood.
- He represents fortitude in faith and a man's strength in supporting his wife and children, as Joseph supported Mary and Jesus.
- Fatherhood is a vocation. It is among the greatest works a man can do: to care for his children, to protect and provide spiritually for his family, and to lead with faith and full trust in the will of the Lord.
- Joseph is the guardian of the Holy Family, the patron of the universal Church, and a father to all.
- As we celebrate our fathers this month, let's make sure to extend our gratitude to the fatherly figures in our lives, especially to our priests.
- Let's thank them for all the work they have done to help cultivate us into the people we are and will be.
- "Hear, O children, a father's instruction, be attentive, that you may gain understanding!" (Pr 4:1).

Juneteenth

- This relatively new federal holiday commemorates the June 19, 1865, announcement to enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, that they were freed.
- It has been celebrated annually by many since 1865 and was declared a federal holiday in 2021.
- Juneteenth honors and remembers the completion of emancipation of enslaved Black people in the U.S.
- We can look to Ven. Augustus Tolton, who was born into slavery in Missouri about a decade before emancipation. The family escaped to Illinois in 1863, where Augustus began his Catholic education.
- The priests he worked with saw something special in Tolton, but because of the color of his skin, no school or seminary in the country would accept him. He did not give up.
- Eventually, he secured a position at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome, where he was ordained a priest in 1886.
- He was the first openly Black Catholic priest in the United States.
- Father Tolton was assigned back to America, though he had hoped to be a missionary in Africa.
- He established a missionary society in Chicago, where he would preach to everyone, regardless of color.
- He became known as "Good Father Gus" by the many people he served.
- Let us pray this month for the intercession of Ven. Augustus Tolton, that we may emulate his perseverance, faithfulness, trust in God and kind-heartedness.
- God calls us to love everyone equally, and to respect all people as his children. Here in the South, it is important to remember the wrongs of our past, so that we can stand for what is right and safeguard an equal future in God's love.
- "For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery ... For through the Spirit, by faith, we await the hope of righteousness" (Gal 5:1).
- "Standing up for the truth of God is the greatest thing in the world" (Martin Luther King Jr.).

Solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist

- The history of baptism goes beyond New Testament times, back to the Jewish tradition of *tevilah*, ritual purification through water.
- In Jewish custom, it was used when someone was “unclean” according to the rules of the Torah.
- John the Baptist took this practice and converted it. What had once been reserved for special circumstances was made available to everyone, Jews and Gentiles alike.
- In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah spoke of a voice in the wilderness who would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.
- “Prepare the way of the Lord” (Mt 3:3 and Is 40:3).
- John, cousin to Jesus, was sent ahead of him to prepare his way, opening the door for Christ to enter our lives.
- Even when he had gained a substantial following, and when some claimed he was the Messiah, John never took advantage of his position. He remained firm in his devotion to Jesus, and when the time came, he stepped aside so that God’s plan could unfold.
- We honor John the Baptist, patron saint of the Diocese of Charleston, as a constant reminder of what it means to be initiated into the faith.
- When we are baptized, we become members of Christ’s bride, the Church.
- As Catholics, we are called to emulate John the Baptist in his strength of faith and evangelical mission, in his devotion to the Lord and in his humility.
- We are called to preach the Word of God to the world.
- We are called to prepare the way of the Lord and step aside.

Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul

- We celebrate Peter and Paul together because they organized and spread Christ’s Church on earth.
- It is important to remember that neither man started as the saint he became.
- Before Jesus’ intercession, Peter spent his days fishing with his brother and went home to his wife. His mother-in-law lived with him; he was like any other working man.
- But he was singled out, chosen by Christ to be among his followers and the leader of the Apostles and the early Church.
- The intercession of our Lord changed him from a businessman and fisherman into the very foundation of the Catholic Church.
- “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18). This moment in the Gospels happens before Peter goes on to deny Christ three times, something Jesus knew would happen. Jesus still chose Peter.
- Christ chooses each of us. He wants us to follow him so he may welcome us into his Sacred Heart of infinite love and forgiveness.
- When we’re first introduced to St. Paul in Scripture, he is standing by as St. Stephen is being stoned to death, the first martyrdom of the Church. Then-named Saul holds the cloaks of the angry mob.
- He persecuted Christians. We learn in Acts of the Apostles: “[He] was trying to destroy the church; entering house after house and dragging out men and women, he handed them over for imprisonment” (8:3).
- Christ appeared to him in a flash of light, asking, “Why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:4).

- Saul was blinded physically, then spiritually awakened to the truth of Christ, and became Paul.
- It is through the love and sacrifice of Christ Jesus that sin is forgiven.
- If we trust in his forgiveness, there is nothing that can keep us from the kingdom of God.