

This past Monday, the world watched in horror and sadness as one of the Church's most beautiful cathedrals, Notre Dame, was engulfed in a fiery inferno. I was at home in Easton with my family watching on live TV as this majestic cathedral, this gem of the Church and Western Civilization, was burning before our eyes. As my family and I were watching the cathedral burn, we couldn't help but cry and get emotional, especially given the somber backdrop of French Catholics singing hymns to our Blessed Mother Mary, whom the Cathedral is named after—"Notre Dame," meaning "Our Lady" in French.

As we watched in horror and sadness, we're hearing all this commentary on the news about all of the priceless and valuable relics, works of art, and artifacts that are contained in the cathedral—relics such as the Crown of Thorns which Jesus wore, a piece of the wood from the Cross of Christ, and some of the nails that were used in our Lord's Crucifixion. These are just amazing artifacts and relics.

And so the story came out that the chaplain of the Paris Fire Brigade, Fr. Jean-Marc Fournier, courageously risked his life, along with a group of firefighters, to save many of these precious relics from the

burning cathedral. “Fr. Fournier is an absolute hero,” a member of the emergency services was quoted as saying. We’re told that in addition to recovering the priceless relics, Fr. Fournier heroically saved the Blessed Sacrament. And brothers and sisters, here lies the unique beauty of this priest’s heroism.

In Fr. Fournier’s act of heroic virtue, we see the splendor of Holy Thursday and the intrinsic unity between the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Most Holy Eucharist! That this priest would run into a burning cathedral and risk his very life in order to save the Blessed Sacrament—Jesus Himself in the Sacred Species, speaks to the awesomeness of the both the Priesthood and the Most Holy Eucharist, the two great sacraments we commemorate tonight.

Brothers and sisters, the truth is that the most precious and valuable Treasure in the Cathedral of Notre Dame is *not* the Crown of Thorns worn by Christ Himself—it’s *not* the nails used in Jesus’ crucifixion or the wood of His Cross—it’s not the beautiful, rose stained-glass windows, or the many priceless paintings and works of art!  
*As important and beautiful as those things are, they are not the most*

*precious treasures in the Cathedral!* Rather, the *most important*, the *most valuable*, and the *most precious Treasure inside Notre Dame is the Blessed Sacrament, the Most Holy Eucharist—our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, truly present: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity! There is no greater treasure, no greater gift, than Jesus Himself, truly present in the Most Holy Eucharist!*

Indeed, the Archbishop of Paris, Michel Aupetit, confirmed simply in an interview on French TV, that the magnificent cathedral of Notre Dame was built for *one reason, not* to be a “jewel,” *not even to house the Crown of Thorns*; Notre Dame existed for “un morceau de pain – for a piece of bread,” the bread, he said, Catholics believe *is* the “Body of Christ.” In other words, the Cathedral of Notre Dame was built to house the Bread of Life—our Eucharistic Lord and Savior.

Brothers and sisters, tonight on Holy Thursday, as we celebrate and cherish our Savior’s gift of Himself in the Most Holy Eucharist, we need to be reminded of the nature and reality of this great gift. The Eucharist is *not a symbol or a representation of Jesus, but rather our Lord and Savior Himself truly present, Body, Blood, Soul, and*

*Divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine.* If we truly let that powerful reality sink in to our hearts and minds, then we will never be the same again. This is why the Church teaches that the Eucharist is the most important sacrament and the greatest treasure on earth *because it is Jesus Himself*, given to us as our spiritual food and nourishment so that we can share in His divine nature, holiness, and Heavenly glory and become the saints we are called to be!

As the Archbishop of Paris said, the reality and gift of the Most Holy Eucharist is exactly why beautiful, majestic cathedrals like Notre Dame were built! These magnificent cathedrals were built for the glorification of God and the sanctification of man, which collectively takes place in the celebration and reception of the Most Holy Eucharist during the Sacrifice of the Mass.

You know, what's beautiful is not just cathedrals like Notre Dame, *but the faith of the people who built cathedrals like Notre Dame!* Such magnificent cathedrals are beautiful expressions of the peoples' deep faith, *especially* in the Real Presence of Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist. The people who built beautiful cathedrals like Notre Dame,

*most of whom were poor by the way*, truly understood the reality of the Most Holy Eucharist and so out of their great love for Christ, they wanted to give our Eucharistic Lord the *absolute best* of what they had to offer—a dwelling place that is worthy of Him, the Savior of the human race. And you can't help but marvel at the beauty and grandeur of such cathedrals, which undoubtedly lift the mind and heart to God and let you know that you are in a uniquely sacred place—a House of the Lord where He mysteriously dwells in His Eucharistic Presence. Now please don't misunderstand me: I'm not saying that every Catholic church needs to be a massive Gothic cathedral. What I *am* saying is that every Catholic church needs to be a beautiful, dignified, and fitting dwelling place for our Eucharistic Lord.

Brothers and sisters, if we want to renew our beloved Church, then any renewal *must begin* in the love and worship of our Savior in the Most Holy Eucharist! If we want Christ to transform our lives, heal our wounds, and give us the peace, freedom, and happiness that we so desperately desire, then we must renew our devotion and love for Him in the Most Holy Eucharist! If we want to become saints and missionary

disciples Who bring the Gospel to a suffering, divided, and confused world, then we must re-center our lives on the Most Holy Eucharist! St. Teresa of Calcutta gave beautiful advice to us saying, “Your life must be woven around the Eucharist. Direct your eyes to Him, who is the Light; bring your hearts very close to His Divine Heart; ask Him for the grace to know Him, for the charity to love Him, for the courage to serve Him. Seek Him longingly.”

Brothers and sisters, *the Most Holy Eucharist is worth* building great cathedrals like Notre Dame. *The Most Holy Eucharist is worth* running into a burning cathedral to save, like Fr. Fournier did. *The Most Holy Eucharist is worth* giving our time to in prayer and adoration. And I say all of this precisely because the Most Holy Eucharist *is Jesus Himself*, the Son of the living God, Who sacrificed everything for us on the cross to save us from sin and death—to save us for all eternity.

May we *never* take this supreme gift of Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist for granted! May we *always* cherish Christ in the Blessed Sacrament as the *greatest gift* on Earth! May we *always* worship this

Gift, love this Gift, adore this Gift, and allow this Gift to transform our  
lives forever.