

33 Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ Year A June 18, 2017
Deuteronomy 8:2-3,14-16 Psalm 147 1Corinthians 10:16-17 John 6:51-52

Today's Solemnity of Corpus Christi, or the Body and Blood of Christ, is the Feast on which we pay special homage to the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. The mystery of the Holy Eucharist is one that faith enables us to accept on the Word of God, who is all-powerful. This Solemnity is an opportunity to renew and deepen our faith.

In our Gospel today, Jesus Christ Himself tells us, the Bible records it very clearly, and the Church teaches it: "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat My Flesh and drink My Blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for My Flesh is true food and My Blood is true drink." Jesus institutes the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the sacrificial meal we partake of at each Mass when we receive Holy Communion. These words of Jesus should be taken literally.

At the Last Supper, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus gives His first priests, the Apostles, the *authority* to change ordinary bread and wine into His own Body and Blood when He says, "Do this in memory of me." The words of Jesus are clear that the Holy Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ under the *appearance* of bread and wine.

The words of Jesus, "eat My Flesh and drink My Blood to have life," are not easy to understand. They are words that we believe and accept for the reason that Jesus Himself said them and, therefore, they are part of our Catholic Doctrine of Faith. In the Gospel Peter does not claim to understand how he is to eat Jesus' Body or drink His Blood, but he knows beyond any doubt that Jesus has the words of everlasting life.

In spite of his lack of understanding, Peter remains loyal to Jesus and desires to follow Him in all things. Peter moves closer to Jesus instead of moving away. This is the model we must follow if we, too, are to have everlasting life with Jesus.

Today, where do we receive the Real Presence of Christ? It is here in the Sacrifice of the Mass where we receive the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood. It is here we recognize our Lord is with us. It is here in the Mass where we offer ourselves to God, and God gives Himself to us. When the priest says the words of Consecration over the bread and wine, by the power of the Holy Spirit acting through Jesus, the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Let's keep our eyes and our hearts open as we witness the Eucharistic miracle take place on the altar of our own Church.

It is Christ Himself, living, glorious, truly and really present, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. Every single bit of bread and every last drop of wine have been completely changed. No trace of bread and wine remains except in mere appearance. Though the appearance of bread and wine remains so that we will be able to receive Holy Communion, they have both truly become Christ.

In receiving the Holy Eucharist, we know that Jesus is *really present with us, but how present are we to Him?* As we approach the altar to partake of the Holy Eucharist, are we fully aware of what we are doing and *Whom* we are about to receive? The Holy Eucharist is *alive!* The *Host* that we receive is not simply a wafer! It's not bread! *It is Jesus Himself* who is *alive* and fully *present* in the Holy Eucharist that we are about to partake.

How many people have forgotten that Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is *alive*? How many people who wait in line are thinking about how much Jesus wants to unite Himself to those who receive Him? How many people are actually filled with awe and gratitude that Jesus loves them so much as to come to them in such an incredible and intimate way?

Or how many people while waiting in line are distracted, busy with other thoughts, preoccupied with their agendas for the day? How many times have people made Jesus sad when they mindlessly receive Him into their body, into their heart, and with no recognition of Jesus' love for them? Can we bring our attention back to full awareness of the gift that we will be receiving? The Holy Eucharist is the most awesome gift never to be disrespected by lack of interest or lack of belief on our part.

When we say “*Amen*,” as we receive Holy Communion, we are not only making an affirmation of our faith, “*I believe*,” but that we are also making a promise to follow Christ faithfully. It is important to remember that receiving Holy Communion is not simply a personal gesture but a public proclamation to the world that we are in communion with Christ and His Holy Catholic Church.

After we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, we have the most profound union and communion with our God, our Creator, dwelling in us, the One who has promised that whoever eats the Flesh and drinks the Blood of His Beloved Son will have eternal life with Him. Because of the true Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, His true Presence resides in *us*. We are no longer creatures of earth, but saved and creatures of heaven. We have been transformed into the Body of Christ.

Those who are unable to receive the Holy Eucharist for a particular reason are invited to cross their arms over their heart and to come up for a blessing from the priest. In doing that, we are asking Jesus to make Himself present in our souls in a spiritual manner.

One cannot truly receive the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, without also having the desire to change and set out on the road traveled by Christ, trying to live as He did in a caring, sharing and loving way. Every celebration of the Mass is a personal invitation to give ourselves as completely as possible to Jesus, and to surrender ourselves to His power of love, which will transform us and bring us to eternal life.

The very fact that we celebrate today’s Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ indicates that we are a people of thanksgiving, a community which knows how to praise and thank God for the basic gifts of life, family, friends, food and clothing. Above all we thank God because of what He has done for us *in, through* and *with* His Beloved Son, Jesus.

The Holy Eucharist is the greatest spiritual gift we can ever have on this earth. It comes from the very Body and Blood of Christ Himself. Let us always keep close to the Mass and to the Holy Eucharist, wherever we are, so that we will always remain close to Christ. The Holy Eucharist is the *source and summit*

of our Catholic life. Without the Holy Eucharist, *there would be no Mass! And there would be no life!* Let us always be grateful that we as Catholics have this opportunity of receiving our Blessed Lord in such an intimate way when we come to Mass.