

We are gathered together as sons and daughters of the family of God to celebrate the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi* or *the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ*. Today and at every Mass, Jesus gives us His total self and unconditional love, while at the same time nourishing us both physically and spiritually. Here we see why our Church calls the Holy Eucharist *the source and summit of our faith*. It is *source* because Jesus is the source of our faith, and it is *summit* as our faith is ultimately about a sharing in His Resurrection and life.

St. Mark's Gospel Reading today tells us of the simple beginnings of the Mass, how Jesus, on the night He is to be betrayed, celebrates the first Holy Eucharist at His final meal with His Apostles. Jesus takes bread, and after blessing it, He breaks it, gives it to them, saying, "*Take; this is My Body.*" Then He takes the cup, and after giving thanks, He gives it to them, saying, "*This is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many.*" 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.

From the first Mass celebrated by Jesus, our Catholic Church has taken Jesus at His word, and by doing what Jesus Himself did on that night, we *re-present* His Real Presence among us in our Holy Mass. It is here in the Sacrifice of the Mass where we receive the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. 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, in the person of Christ, prays 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. This is known as *transubstantiation*. Although we cannot actually see it happening, 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.

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.

When we receive the Holy Eucharist, we receive more than Jesus Christ, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. How can we receive anything more? But we do. Because wherever the Son is, the Father and Holy Spirit are present too. So, when you receive Jesus, the entirety of the Holy Trinity is right there, on your tongue. In heaven, Christ *lives and reigns* together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Father and the Holy Spirit is *really and truly* present with Christ because of the perfect unity of the Trinity.

And wherever you have the Holy Trinity that means Jesus is never alone. When He becomes present in the Holy Eucharist as He is in heaven, without leaving heaven that means that all of heaven is present with Him. Imagine, all of heaven, the angels, the saints and Mary are present in every Mass celebrated because of the true Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist gives us a foretaste of heaven.

We don't just swallow the Eucharist in Holy Communion, we swallow the Creed, we swallow the story of Revelation, the Gospel, the Full Deposit of our Faith, and every truth we profess, and every moment in salvation history. We enter into communion with

the Holy Trinity. All that is on our tongue in Holy Communion. All that is in the Tabernacle of every Catholic Church in every city around the world.

At every Mass, we consume Jesus' resurrected, glorified Body. There is more glory in one consecrated host than our mind can even begin to properly appreciate. And the glory feeds our bodies and souls, preparing them not just for the journey through this life but also for what comes at journey's end.

The Holy Eucharist is *alive*. We are not receiving a dead Body that was crucified two thousand years ago. If a stranger who knew nothing about the Eucharist were to watch the way we receive, would he know this? When you and I approach the Eucharist, does it look like we believe we are about to take in our bodies the *living Person, Jesus Christ, true God and true man*? At every Mass, in every Holy Communion, Jesus gives His divine life to us.

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 is a testimony that we are a people of faith. 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 resurrected 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 participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.