

36 Corpus Christi or Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ Year C June 19, 2022
Genesis 14:18-20 Psalm 110 1Corinthians 11:23-26 Luke 9:11-17

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*. In many ways, we are very much like the Gospel crowd. We, too, have come with all our hopes and needs to *encounter* Jesus. Here Jesus creates a *Eucharistic world* where all experience His *Real Presence* and the hope of something better. In this Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we are gathered together to deepen our faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

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. 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.

Today's Gospel, the *Feeding of the Five Thousand*, is found in all four Gospels. For Luke, the miracle takes place in a deserted place. We find in this deserted place Jesus has been feeding their souls with His teachings all day long. Now Jesus is going to satisfy their physical hunger. The Apostles have only five loaves and two fish which Jesus blesses, breaks, and gives to the people. In the hands of Jesus, simple sharing turns into a great miracle.

This miracle foreshadows the account of the Last Supper. Jesus takes bread, blesses it, and breaks it saying, "*Take and eat, this is My Body.*" From the earliest days, the Church has taken our Lord at His word. By doing what Jesus Himself did on the night of the Last Supper, we experience His Real Presence among us in the Holy Eucharist.

Why did Jesus give us His Body and Blood? Jesus says, "*Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you do not have life within you.*" 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*.

The Holy Eucharist signifies the greatest act of sharing that Jesus could do for us. He offers His blessed life for us, *Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity*, broken upon the altar of the Cross which is *re-presented* on our altar in an *unbloody* manner. This ultimate gift of His life gives us freedom from sin and death and a share in the everlasting life of Our Lord.

From the first Mass celebrated by Jesus at the Last Supper, our Catholic Church has taken Jesus at His word, and by doing what Jesus Himself did on that night. It is here in the Sacrifice of the Mass where we receive the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the Most Holy Eucharist. It is here where 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, "*Yes, I believe this is the Body of Christ*," but 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 who 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 Holy 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.

But, not only do we attest to the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, we are given the privilege of joining Jesus as He offers the perfect sacrifice of Himself. Our Catechism tells us that we are united with the divine action of salvation through the Holy Eucharist. “*All who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into the communion with Him and form but one body*” (1329).

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. Without the Holy Eucharist, *there would be no Mass! And we would have no life in God!* If we *do not partake* of the Body and Blood of Christ, then Jesus said we would not have life in Him.

And it is in the Mass where we receive life, the life of Christ when we partake in the Holy Eucharist. *The Holy Eucharist is a sacrament of life.* The Holy Eucharist “*becomes for us the Bread of Life*” (*Offertory Prayer*). Let us always attend Mass and receive the Holy Eucharist, wherever we are, so that we will always have life in 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 surrender 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 word *Eucharist* in Greek means *thanksgiving*. The very fact that we celebrate today’s *Feast of Corpus Christi* 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.

Let us also give thanks for the *unity* Jesus has granted us as members of the Mystical Body of Christ. Let us show our thankfulness by living today, and each day, in imitation of Jesus, loving one another and sharing with the blessing of being part of Christ's Body.

Today's *Feast of Corpus Christ* focuses on the Real Presence of Christ *Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist*. It is food for our journey to the eternal Kingdom. 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. The Holy Eucharist, the Real Presence of Christ, is the same yesterday, today and forever.