

The Solemnity of Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

June 2, 2024

Today we gather on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ - *Corpus Christi* to celebrate and acknowledge and give thanks for a meal that truly matters, a sacred meal, a one-of-a-kind of meal. And we have been taught that this is not simply some kind of a symbol. Rather, we, in faith, believe that our Lord Jesus is truly present in this holy food, that what we are receiving is no longer bread and wine - but is the Lord himself.

In fact the last two precious gifts given to us by Jesus are the Holy Eucharist as our spiritual food on Holy Thursday and His mother Mary as our spiritual mother on Good Friday. Corpus Christi is then the celebration of the abiding presence of a loving God as Emmanuel – God with us – in order to give collective thanks to our Lord for his living with us in the Eucharist. This feast also gives us an occasion to learn more about the importance and value of the “Real Presence” so that we may appreciate the Sacrament better and receive maximum benefit from the Eucharist.

We believe in the “Real Presence” of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist because:

- 1) *Jesus promised it after miraculously feeding the 5000.*
- 2) *Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist during his Last Supper.*
- 3) *Jesus commanded his disciples to repeat it in his memory.*
- 4) *“Nothing is impossible with God.”*

We explain the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist by “transubstantiation” which means that the substance of the consecrated bread and wine is changed to the substance of the risen Jesus’ glorified

Body and Blood by the action of the Holy Spirit, and its accidents (like color, shape, taste etc.), remain the same.

Our scripture readings for this Feast this year emphasize the theme of Covenant blood because the ancient people sealed Covenants with the blood of ritually sacrificed animals, and Jesus sealed his New Covenant with his own Blood shed on Calvary.

Today's first reading describes how Moses, by sprinkling the blood of a sacrificed animal on the altar and on the people, accepted the Covenant Yahweh proposed and made with His People. In the second reading, St. Paul affirms that Jesus sealed the New Covenant with his own Blood, thereby putting an end to animal sacrifices.

Our Gospel from Mark details how Jesus converted this ancient ritual into a Sacrament and sacrifice. Instead of the lamb's blood, Jesus offered his own Divine/human Body and Blood, and instead of sprinkling us with blood, Jesus put It into our hands as food and drink:

“Take ... eat ... this IS my Body which will be given up for you” (He did not say “This represents my body”), and “Take ... drink ... This IS ... my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal Covenant, which will be poured out for you (nor did He say, “This represents my blood...”) for the forgiveness of sins”.

As you all know, Jesus our Divine Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist both as a sacramental banquet and a sacrificial offering. As a Sacrament,

- a) *the Eucharist is a visible sign that gives us God's grace and God's life,*
- b) *as a Meal, The Eucharist nourishes our souls.*
- c) *As a sacrifice, the Eucharistic celebration is a re-presentation or re-enactment of Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary, completed in His Resurrection and Ascension. And we offer Jesus' sacrifice to God the Father for the remission of our sins.*

It's really incredible to think that our loving God comes to us in this way, at this table, in this meal. It's astounding to think that every time we come forward to receive, we are encountering and in the presence of a kind of miracle something that truly transcends all the ordinary things we experience each day. Yet, it is this coming together of the extraordinary and the ordinary we are sharing in every time we come to this holy table.

It's unbelievably remarkable when you really think about it. That's why the Church calls what we do here the "source and summit" of our Christian life. It's just that important.

Yet the experience of receiving the Lord's Body and Blood is not a static thing. Not only do any two of us have the exact same experience each time we receive (because we are each unique), we ourselves (individually) are not assured of the exact same experience each time we come forward. In other words the "effect" this sacred meal has on us, that is, the degree to which this meal "achieves" what God wants it to achieve, is not something that's guaranteed. And that's because what God wants to achieve does not depend on him alone (by his own choice). It also involves you and me.

OUR faith in what we believe this food to truly be.

OUR trust that God wants to come to us in this way.

OUR belief that we can become whom we eat.

OUR sincere desire and willingness to be changed, to be transformed, to be more than we were yesterday.

And all of those things take a strong appetite - an appetite for God.

And that's where things get tricky. You see, just as a child isn't that concerned with preserving his or her appetite for a meal to come later, we too can suppress our appetite for the ONE who wants to nourish us and

sustain us and make us more than we were when we walked through these doors.

Sometimes we do that simply by trying to satisfy our hunger for God with other things. Sometimes we do that by letting ourselves get overly distracted by the busyness of life. Sometimes we do that by not really wanting to change, not really wanting to be better people.

Sometimes we do that by simply forgetting what is truly happening at this table each time we gather in faith. And sometimes we do that by not really believing that our God can actually make something incredibly beautiful out of sinful me and out of sinful you. All “appetite suppressants”.

And so, today we gather in gratitude for the incredible God we have, our loving God who comes to us as real food for the journey. And we pledge to do all we can to make sure to preserve our appetite for the food only he can provide - his very self - knowing that, in the end, there is nothing and no one we need more. May our hunger never wane.