

Feast (QA&SJ) of the Body and Blood Year B

Today on the solemnity of Corpus Christi we are called to focus on the life-giving Body and Blood of Jesus that we will receive in the Holy Eucharist. Our gospel gives us the story of the first Holy Mass as Jesus sent two of His disciples to prepare the room for the Last Supper - but He didn't give them the exact address. He said, "*Follow a man carrying a water jar.*" We may ask, *why a man carrying a jar?* Jewish women normally carried water jars so the sight of a man carrying a jar would be odd and obviously noticeable. Jesus may have been intentionally vague about naming the location so Judas would not know the meeting place and bring the soldiers to arrest Him there.

With his account St. Mark offers us interesting points on the significance of Corpus Christi. First, he mentions the preparation for the Passover supper. This is the *Jewish time of remembrance and thanksgiving* for Yahweh's saving love that freed them from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. Second, He narrates the institution of the Eucharist at the last supper; Jesus ratifies with his own blood the new covenant. It replaces the old covenant of the blood of animals, as we heard from our *first reading*, giving us the background to understand his words at the last supper about the shedding of his blood. The action of Jesus confirms God's *indwelling with his people, his sharing of their life and destiny in a covenant of love.*

These were similar words Moses spoke when he sprinkled the blood on the people to ratify their covenant with God. Blood was the symbol of life; by virtue of the covenant they now shared life with God. At the Last Supper Jesus takes bread, blesses and breaks it, and says, “*Take it, this is my body.*” He likewise takes a cup of wine, gives thanks, and says, “*This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many.*” In the Bible, body and blood signify and indicate the very life of a person, *his very self*. Therefore, the bread and wine at the Last Supper are none other than Jesus, who would be broken by suffering and death on Calvary—as an offering for the salvation of many. Moreover, Jesus had come to share God’s life not just with Israel but for us all. And this is the meaning of the Aramaic phrase ‘*for many.*’

Jesus is present in other ways in the Mass: in the words of the Scriptures, in moments of silence, in the hymns and prayers, in the sign of peace... When we approach the altar to receive the Body of Christ, we have our finest example of His abiding presence with us. Remember, the bread and wine before us are not mere ‘*symbols*’, they are Christ’s Real Presence. Jesus is the one being broken and shared. He said, “*I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.*” This meal is the basis of our celebration of the *Eucharist*, which comes from the Greek word ‘*eucharistia*’ meaning thanksgiving. Hence, the Eucharist is a thanksgiving for Christ’s gift of life. *What significance and implication*

does the Eucharist convey to us? It is an invitation to a life that is offered for the good of others. St. Theresa said, *“We too are hosts which Jesus wished to transfer into himself.”* In other words, the Holy Mass we celebrate should bring us to real transformation. When we receive Jesus, we incorporate *His life, His teachings and His love* into us. It means we acquire His ways of *thinking, loving and serving*. St. Justin said, *“The Eucharist is the moment in which the Christians help the orphans and widows, the sick, the poor, the prisoners...in a word, those in need.”*

Our communion with Jesus reaches its deepest level and greatest expression in the Eucharist where we share in His risen Life. The Eucharist is: 1. A sacrament—it makes real, in the concrete forms of bread and wine, the risen Christ. 2. A meal—in this encounter with Jesus we are fed and nourished. 3. A sacrifice—in the Eucharist we see Jesus’ gift of self for us on the crucifix. 4. An expectation—the Eucharist points to our goal of eternal union with Jesus reminding us that the Eucharist is primarily about relations. If we allow ourselves to be nourished and sustained by the Eucharist, it implies charity and community with Jesus and with our brothers & sisters.

In this life, there are givers and there are takers. Pope Francis said, *“The Lord is knocking at the door of our hearts, have we put a sign on the door saying: ‘do not disturb?’”* *“When you’re giving, give 100 percent - except when you’re giving blood.”* Givers are those who

literally sacrifice life and limb for others. Givers are everywhere, often unknown and unnoticed. They just give and give, no fuss, no publicity, no airs, no pretense, just plain and simple giving. *'You are what you eat.'* *Does the Eucharist you receive bear fruit in you that you become more charitable and loving?* Every day we are asked to give up something to be able to give life. We can know the sincerity of our belief when no *discord, strife* or *bitterness* exists among us. *Can we learn to forgive, to overlook weakness, to understand the failure of friends and not to close our hearts when we are hurt?* Lastly our feast reminds us that we are recipients of God's wonderful love through the redemption of His Son. This should inspire us to become like Jesus, to be also *'Bread and Wine'* that sustains others in their faith and in their lives. Amen!