

*Readings*

Gn 14:18-20

Ps 110:1, 2, 3, 4

1 Cor 11:23-26

Lk 9:11b-17

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Many of you will remember celebrating *Corpus Christi*. There was often a procession with incense and singing. Those of you who went to parish schools probably remember how much preparation the Sisters put into that procession. The way we celebrate may have changed, but today is the same feast of the Church.

In this month, in which many young people have celebrated their First Communion, the Church celebrates the living presence of Christ, which we know as the gift of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

When your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews made their first communion it was a proud moment for you because they became a part of a rich tradition you cherish, and because it was another sign of their belonging to the Church you love. With them you would have heard that it is not a one day celebration - but a lifetime, a way of life. The readings today help us understand why: it involves the past, the present and the future.

Every time we celebrate we hear Jesus's words from the Last Supper: *Do this in memory of me*. The Mass is the most important prayer of the Church; it is the source and summit of our praise of God. The memory Jesus is speaking of is His coming among us, his dying for us and His rising to new life and sharing that life with us in our baptism.

The miracle of the Mass, the Eucharist, is that it is a remembering with Christ who is truly present and alive with us as he was at the Last Supper. That is why it is so sacred and why we are so honored when another member of our family becomes a part of it.

My great-aunt lost her son in WWII. I was so moved when I heard that for about 20 years a couple of the men who served with Camilo visited my great-aunt every year bringing their families in order to remember and honor their friend and comrade. They brought gifts and she prepared a meal. It is something like this and so very much more that takes place at the Eucharist. It is so much more, because it is the Son of God we remember and because He is truly with us as we celebrate the sacrament.

Another sentence we hear at each Mass is: *This cup is a covenant in my blood*; we heard it today in the 2nd reading. Jesus Christ gave his life so we would be a part of him. That love is a covenant, an unbreakable bond with Him. The Eucharist is not only the sacrifice of Christ, but it is a sacramental meal - Christ nourishes, he feeds us. The consecrated bread and wine is food for our journey, bread for the road as it was in the Gospel when Christ multiplied for everyone the little food they had. We are like that multitude gathered to listen to Him. They not only listened, but agreed to follow him, he saw that they had the strength to do so. That's what he does for us now, in the present, every time we come to Mass.

That Gospel tells us also that the presence of Christ in the Eucharistic bread has a purpose for the future, as well. The clue to this is the beginning of the Gospel: *Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God*. This tells us that Jesus came to create a new world order, he came so we would return to God and be one with God. He came so that the work of bringing people more and more to unity would be taken up by the followers of Jesus. We know that will be the work of a lifetime! The Eucharist is where it begins to happen.

One of my Augustinian brothers who just passed was a gifted scholar and loved to turn a phrase. One of his versions of a penitential rite for the beginning of Mass went this way:

*Lord, we your people are broken. Lord, have mercy*

*Christ, all our lives we mend. Christ, have mercy*

*Lord, your grace is the glue. Lord, have mercy.*

As you can imagine, at times his style registered some surprise in his listeners! Nevertheless, his words help us understand the connection between the Kingdom of God and the Eucharist.

After Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God, he told the apostles to feed the hungry crowd. They said: *It's impossible to do this*. Then he asked them what they had. A young boy had five loaves and two fish. He told them to pass that around and miraculously everyone ate and was satisfied.

The message of Jesus is to us: the Church, *we the Church* have to accept the commitment to mend the broken, hungry world we are, often painfully, living in. Why? Because we have become the body of Christ. He doesn't ask us to perform the miracle he performed. He asks us to share our poverty ... to share what we are and have, as little as it might seem to us. Speak a word of forgiveness to someone who hurt us. Try not to hold on to grudges that don't solve anything. Avoid the jealousies that can't give me anything more than I have. Be generous with the little we have, especially with those who have so much less than we have ever had.

We trust that Christ will make up for what is lacking; He will do the rest. We may not see it right away, but we don't let our limited sight keep us from doing our part. *Christ's grace, his love is the glue*. We will be more united for it.

So, that's the future each Eucharist will bring about. How else can we understand the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves?

The past in Christ, the present in Christ, the future in Christ. It is all here for us in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ.