

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ C/2016

The readings of this solemnity of the most Holy Body and Blood of our Lord talk about the importance of the Eucharist. They show that the Eucharist is the spiritual food along the Christian journey of life. They invite us to believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharistic bread and the wine.

The first reading recalls the encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek. It shows how Melchizedek blessed Abraham and offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for the victory over his enemies. It shows also the sincerity of Abraham who gave the tithe as a sign of his gratitude to God.

What is behind this text is the idea that God blesses human beings in their enterprises. Another idea is the recognition that because God is at the origin of human success, it is good to be thankful to him. The last idea is about the role of priests as a bridge between God and his people.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus feeds almost five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. First of all, the Gospel talks about the teaching of Jesus to the crowd and the healing of many sick among them. Then, it reports on what happened as the evening approached and the apostles suggested to Jesus to dismiss the crowd.

After that, the Gospel gives an account of the multiplication of the bread as almost five thousand people were fed by Jesus with five loaves and two fish without counting the twelve wicker baskets of leftover fragments.

What do we learn from today's readings? Today I want to talk about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. In order to remain faithful to the readings of the day, I want to examine the truth of the real presence of Jesus from the point of view of the multiplication of bread and from the Last Supper.

In fact, in today's Gospel Jesus feeds five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. The multiplication of bread is preceded by the request of the disciples that Jesus dismisses the crowd so that they go to surrounding villages and farms to find food and lodging.

This request was motivated by the fact that to the judgment of the disciples, it would be impossible, even with enough food at their disposal, to feed everybody without problem. Moreover, they were in a deserted place where it was difficult to find such a food. In that context, the solution of dismissing the crowd seemed more reasonable.

And yet, it was at that moment that Jesus took the least of food they had and fed the crowd. In other words, what was impossible to the disciples' eyes became possible with Jesus' intervention. Such vision shows us that even if reasonably speaking, something is impossible to the human mind, it cannot be the same with God. For God, everything is possible.

It is that logic that presides at the truth of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. In fact, it might be difficult to humans to conceive clearly of Jesus' presence in the Eucharistic bread and wine, and yet, it cannot be denied just because it is not understandable to human intelligence.

Anyway, someone might say: well I concede you the argument, but the conclusion you reach is made from the multiplication of the bread and not from the mouth of Jesus himself saying that he is the Eucharistic bread and wine.

Here, the text of St Paul becomes more than enlightening. In fact, St Paul tells the Corinthians that he handed on to them what he received from the Lord Jesus. What is that?

In fact, at the Last Supper, Jesus took bread, and, after giving thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples by saying that it was his body given for them and they should do that in remembrance of him. In the same way, he gave them a cup of wine by declaring that it was the cup of covenant in his blood and they should drink it as often as they could in remembrance of him.

As the words stand, it is absolutely clear that by giving the bread to the disciples, Jesus did not say, "This is my bread", but rather, "This is my body". In the same way, by giving the cup, he did not say, "This is my wine", but rather "This is the cup of covenant in my blood". In that case, it becomes obvious that we are dealing in the Eucharist, not with symbols, but really with the body and blood of Jesus.

Moreover, Jesus has eaten that Supper with his disciples before dying on the cross. In that case, there is a close relationship between the Eucharist and the cross. That is why the recommendation "in remembrance of me" and "as often as" you can is an invitation to commemorate regularly the last supper and, at the same time, to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross.

I believe that it is the reason why the Eucharist transcends time and space, generations and nations, in order to be a spiritual gift to the world. As Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and he will be tomorrow (Heb 10: 13), whenever the Eucharist is celebrated, Jesus continues giving his life for the salvation of the world as he did two thousand years ago.

To eat and to drink at the table of the Eucharist, then, is to receive Jesus and to be united with him. In fact, after the consecration, the bread and wine we offer in the Mass become the body and blood of Christ. They are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit into the sacrifice of self-immolation of his life he once offered on the cross.

In this feast, let us long for the food of heaven that Jesus alone can give. As the physical food nourishes the body, let us be open to the Eucharist and receive Jesus for the healing of our souls. Let us ask Jesus to heal our doubt and increase our faith in his real presence in the Eucharist. May God bless you all!

Genesis 14: 18-20; 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26; Luke 9: 11b-17



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