

## **Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ C2022**

In a society of abundance like that in which we live, bread or drink, like water, is not a big deal. The problem perhaps would be about what type of foods or drinks to choose among the variety we have on the market. However, for the poor a piece of bread or a cup of water is more than sustenance; it is a matter of life or death; it is all about survival and life itself.

The Gospel of this morning gives us an idea of what Jesus felt when he saw the crowd of people following him hungry. They were among the poor who had accepted his word and followed him everywhere to listen to him. Jesus was concerned for their wellbeing and their survival. He knew that if they did not eat, they would be weak and his words would not find an open ear to receive them. That led him to intervene and act promptly by multiplying the bread in order to feed them.

By doing so Jesus wanted to draw their attention to the truth that he is the one who spiritually feeds us and calms the hunger of people. The physical hunger is just the symbol of a deep need that only God can satisfy in human beings. Such an understanding shows us that the narrative of the multiplication of the bread contains layers it fits to explore on this Solemnity of Corpus Christi.

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. What was impossible to the disciples' eyes became possible with Jesus' intervention. Even if reasonably speaking it would be impossible to the human mind to feed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, yet at the judgement of Jesus, it was possible. For God, everything is possible beyond what human beings can imagine. Jesus had revealed himself by multiplying the bread as a master who makes the impossible, possible.

The multiplication of the bread is the symbol of the Eucharist in which Jesus gives his own life for the salvation of many. By feeding the crowd in the desert Jesus, indeed, vouched for their welfare and survival. We know, however, that the crucial moment where Jesus has given his life for the salvation of the world is the moment of his Passion and Death. The multiplication of the bread is, then, the anticipation of Jesus' self-offering on the cross because it was there that he gave his life as holocaust in order to save the world.

That is why St Paul links the Eucharist to the Last Supper that Jesus had with his disciples. The Eucharist is the commemoration and the perpetuation in time of the sacrifice of the cross through which Jesus gave up his life for our salvation. As St Paul says, "on the night he was handed over, Jesus took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of

me". In the same way, he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me".

The Eucharistic bread and wine we receive at the altar are the "unbloody" sacrifice of Jesus' self-immolation performed, once and for all, on the cross. His body and blood, present on the altar under the signs of bread and wine, signify the total immolation of his life for the salvation of the world. Thus, St Paul says, "As often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes" again.

Anytime the bread and wine are consecrated by an ordained minister, according to the order of priest Melchizedek and the words Jesus intended to be used, they are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit into the body and the blood of Christ.

By referring, on this feast of Corpus Christi, to the miracle of the multiplication of five loaves and two fish Jesus performed to feed five thousand people, Luke wants to tell us that in the Eucharist we are fed by the Lord who gives us his body and blood as nourishment. In the Eucharist, the Lord Jesus feeds us, strengthens us and restores our energy so that we keep going in our pilgrimage on earth. Physical hunger needs physical food, but spiritual hunger needs to be satisfied only by the bread that comes from the hand of the Son of God.

So is the Eucharist at the center of Christian life. In our way through the desert of life, we are in need. The Lord is there present; he comes to us with his care and love, feeding us with "the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation".

To eat and to drink at the table of the Eucharist is to receive Christ, and to be united with him. But as the love of God is inseparable from the love of our fellow human beings, we cannot be united with Jesus without being in communion with one another. That is why the feast of the body and blood of Christ reminds us of the importance of the community. We cannot eat at the same table, and at the same time maintain division, grudges and hatred with one another.

Let us remember that, though our society is a society of abundance, many people hunger and thirst for friendship, love, forgiveness, understanding, respect, etc. Where we suffer from absence, Jesus wants to be present to us with all the concern of a friend for a friend. He wants to share with us his life and strengthen us. He wants to mean something to you and me. Would you like to open your heart to him and to make communion with him possible? God bless you!

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



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