

## Homily of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ Year A, 2020

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16; Psalm 147:12-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6:51-58

Every wise person intending to undertake an important long journey makes arrangement for food and drink to sustain him or her on the journey. Before the Israelites began the exodus, God commanded them to observe the Passover meal. The Passover meal was a spiritual exercise than just a physical meal, to sustain the Israelites spiritually on the journey. The first reading tells us how God continued to sustain them on their journey in the desert by providing them with manna.

Jesus did the same before he left the world. He instituted the Holy Eucharist, his Body and Blood, during the Last Supper, to sustain us on our spiritual journey on earth to eternity. St. Paul recalls in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, 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 also the cup, after supper, saying, 'This is my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"

During the Last Supper, Jesus did not say, "It is like my body." Or, "It resembles my body." Or, "It is in place of my body." He said, "This is my body." "This is my blood." This is why we believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. This is why we adore the Body of Jesus in the tabernacle. When we come into a Catholic Church and see a tabernacle and a tabernacle light, we know, immediately, that the Eucharist is present in the tabernacle. We are required to genuflect in reverence. Jesus is no longer physically with us, but he has left himself spiritually with us in the Eucharist.

Jesus teaches us in the Gospel, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. ... Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ... This is the bread that came down from heaven... Whoever eats this bread will live forever" (John 6:51-58). The Catholic Church believes that this passage is one of the biblical foundations of her belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Non-Catholics, on the other hand, insist that this passage should be interpreted and understood figuratively.

The Catholic Church believes and teaches that the mystery of transubstantiation takes place during Eucharistic celebration at the prayer of consecration. At that time, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. This is our faith. We are grateful to God for the gift of the Eucharist. We, who celebrate the Eucharist and receive it know its power. There are uncountable testimonies.

We are to receive the Eucharist reverently and worthily. We must not disregard St. Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 11:28-29, "Let each one, then, examine himself before eating of the bread and drinking of the cup. Otherwise he drinks his own condemnation in not recognizing the body." This is why the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us to prepare for the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

As already stated, the Eucharist is food for our spiritual journey. It gives us spiritual nourishment just as material food gives nourishment to our body.

The Eucharist has transformative power. It gives us the graces to become Christ-like, whom we receive. St. Augustine of Hippo challenges us, "Behold what you are; become what you receive."

The Eucharist is the commemoration of the sacrifice of Jesus for our sanctification, for expiation of our sins, and for our salvation. It is for this reason that we celebrate the Eucharist for the living and the dead.

The Eucharist has physical and spiritual powers. God answers many prayers and uncountable miracles take place during the celebration of the Eucharist, and the many times we receive the Eucharist. This is why we celebrate the Eucharist for various intentions.

The celebration of the Eucharist is our communion with the Trinity, the angels and the saints. The celebration is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet after our life here on earth.

The benefits of the Eucharist are many. It is for this reason that we are encouraged to participate actively and attentively in the Eucharistic celebration and to receive the Eucharist worthily.

**Fr. Martin Eke, MSP**