

## Homily - Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) C

We celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ (Corpus Christi). Our liturgical readings help us to learn about the divine pedagogy, the divine manner in which God teaches us gradually, patiently and in stages (General Directory for Catechesis, 139). We discover how everything that transpired in the Old Testament was a pointer to greater mysteries to be revealed in the New Testament. Thus, the Eucharist was gradually revealed to us. Our First Reading (Gn 14:18-20) has many important symbolisms for our New Testament Worship. It anticipates the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus, the ministerial priesthood and the basic stewardship of time, talent and treasure.

“Melchizedek, king of Salem” and a “priest of God Most High” clearly points to Jesus Christ. “Melchi-zekek”, from its Hebrew derivation, translates “King of Righteousness”; while “Salem” translates “peace (cf. Heb 7:1-4). Thus, God inspired the Biblical writers to foretell about Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, the King of Righteousness and Peace. The offering of bread and wine, indicating also “the bread of the Presence” (Exod 25:30), surely prefigures the “Body of Christ.” Only God can feed his people properly; so Wisdom invites all, saying, “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed” (Prov 9:5). This too was in anticipation of the Sacrifice of the Bread and Wine that is truly the body and blood of Christ, the Sacrifice of the New and Eternal Covenant.

Our gospel passage (Lk 9:11b-17) shows how Jesus gradually came to lead us from the known to the unknown; from the ordinary to the extraordinary. Jesus preached about the kingdom of God, not human affairs or a worldly kingdom. He leads us gradually and patiently to understand what sort of food can direct us into that kingdom. The opportunity came when, as the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, “Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to ... find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.” He said to them, “Give them some food yourselves.” They could not believe what he was asking them to do. They replied, “Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people.” He was actually about to teach them that “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts” (Zech 4:6). Ultimately, it is God who will feed his

people.

Now the crowd was about five thousand. Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to distribute. They all ate, were satisfied and had leftovers. Jesus has just demonstrated that He is the eternal high priest who blesses His people with superabundance. At Mass, it is not the human priest who feeds us; Jesus himself feeds us with the food that can nourish the soul for eternal life. He declares, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:36).

The Second Reading (1Cor 11:23-26) shows the climax of revelation of God on the priesthood according to the order of “Melchizekek”. Jesus fulfils the role of Melchizedek definitively. St. Paul testifies to how the Eucharist was inaugurated by Jesus “on the night he was handed over.” He 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.” Also, the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” Thus, the word of Scripture is fulfilled: “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed” (Prov 9:5). It is Jesus himself that makes the bread become his Body and the wine become his true blood. That is why “Real Presence” (NOT symbolic presence) is guaranteed beyond any reasonable doubt. Jesus is God and does not deceive anyone; he has power to deliver whatever he has promised.

Finally, Jesus invites us constantly to celebrate the Eucharist in memory of him; that is, in adoration and thanksgiving. God’s commandment is, “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.” Thus from the earliest time, the Church has always celebrated the Mass “at least once a week” (cf. Acts 20:7; also, Acts 2:46). This is a wonderful stewardship of time. It also affords us, just as Abram did, to offer a worthy stewardship of talent and treasure of all our blessings. Never forget that we are the people of God and the body of Christ. We therefore have no identity and dignity apart from God and Christ. Let us ask God to give us always the grace to take part fruitfully in the communion of saints through a conscious and active participation in the weekly liturgies. Let nothing else – golfing, baseball, vacation, or any other interest – overshadow our commitment to serve the Lord in our weekly Eucharistic celebration. God loves us and has given us this eternal banquet to make us have communal fellowship with him (John 6:56). What a gift!