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Body and Blood of Christ - 19 June 2022

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19 June 2022

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Introduction

The greatest gift which God gives to the Church is the Eucharist – the body and blood of his Risen Son, Jesus. As we are fed and nourished with so great a gift, do we allow ourselves to be truly transformed into the Body of Christ, bringing life to the world in which we live? During this Refugee Week we could carefully consider the needs of all displaced people around the world. What can we do?

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you become food for us to eat.
Lord, have mercy.

You strength us for life in the Spirit.
Christ, have mercy.

You make us one with the Father.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect

The oration

O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament
have left us a memorial of your Passion,
grant us, we pray,
so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood
that we may always experience in ourselves
the fruits of your redemption.

Commentary by Gerard Moore

Our collect has been in the manuscript tradition from the earliest times of the celebration of this feast and betrays some of its medieval predilections. The 'wonderful sacrament' which is also a 'memorial' of the passion is the celebration of the Eucharist itself. Piety somewhat confusedly, though customarily, also refers to the consecrated Bread and Wine as the Sacrament. The sacred mysteries here is the presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and cup. The question remains what

it means to 'revere' this mystery. The Eucharistic liturgy would infer that the highest reverence to be made to the Body and Blood of the Lord is to eat and drink of it at the table of the Lord. The prayer is not so clear on this, and the thirteenth century context would dictate that it refers more to reverence by adoration and spiritual communion. The petition links reference to an experience of the fruits of God's redeeming actions. There is in this not so much a dwelling on the passion of Christ, particularly the sense of blood, but a rejoicing that the power of the redemption is alive in us.

First Reading

Genesis 14:18-20

Upon returning after rescuing his nephew Lot, Abram is blessed by Melchizedek the priest-king of Salem, invoking the God Most High. Melchizedek blesses Abram with bread and wine.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 109:1-4. R. v. 4

You are a priest forever, in the line of Melchizedek.

Today's psalm is no doubt chosen because of its reference to Melchizedek. It is one of the royal psalms, associated with King David and rich in images of enthronement. The psalm also establishes a father-son relationship between God and the king.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Today's Second Reading is considered by scholars to be the earliest account of the institution of the Eucharist. In calling the Corinthian church back to right order, Paul reminds them of what the communal meal is about. Not gluttony and drunkenness, but as a memorial of the Lord Jesus.

Gospel Reading

Luke 9:11-17

By taking five loaves and two fish, blessing them, breaking the bread and sharing it, Jesus feeds five thousand. And there is enough left over to fill twelve baskets. When we are fed by Jesus, especially in the Eucharist, there is always more than enough to satisfy our every need.

Reflection

In the Bible, the figure of Melchizedek is somewhat mysterious. He appears only once in the Old Testament in the brief episode which we read in today's First Reading. We know little about him. We are told that he was king of Salem, but we do not really know where Salem was. Some think Salem is Jerusalem, but we are far from certain. We are also told that Melchizedek is also a priest of God Most High who offers bread and wine.

Indeed, it is because of this that we still remember him today. In our First Eucharistic Prayer, we ask the Father to look with favour upon our offerings and accept them as he once accepted the offering of your high priest Melchizedek. Bread and wine. Offered and blessed.

In today's Second Reading, St Paul is also concerned with bread and wine that is offered and shared. In writing his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul is recounting the events of the Last Supper. How Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and shared it: 'This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me.' And then, in the same way he took the cup after supper: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood...whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.' Bread and wine. Offered and blessed.

It is the bread and wine offered by Jesus at the Last Supper, which is our Eucharist. But it is more than just bread and wine. For, in the Eucharist, we are nourished with the body and blood of the Risen Christ.

From its very beginning, the Church has gathered for this breaking of the bread. This is perhaps not so surprising. The Last Supper was not the only meal Jesus shared. Many, many times in the New Testament we find Jesus sharing a meal with others. These meals, shared with the poor and outcast, were one of the signs of the coming of the Kingdom. A sign of welcome and inclusion.

And the meal as a sign of the Kingdom reaches a highpoint in the Last Supper. At the Last Supper, Jesus interprets his death as a death for others. This death for others is symbolised in the breaking and sharing of bread, and the pouring and sharing of wine. And could we forget the meals Jesus shares after the resurrection? Perhaps the most famous takes place at Emmaus, where the disciples recognised Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

And it is our faith that we recognise Jesus as present in the breaking of the bread. Of all the ways in which he is present in the Church and in the prayer of the Church, it is our faith that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharistic species of bread and wine. This stems from the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: 'This is my body...this is my blood.' By repeating the words of institution, the Church remembers Jesus in a way which renders him present. The pronouncement effects what it says. This real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist has long been taught by the Church. And the Church has explained this presence through the doctrine of transubstantiation. While the outward appearances of bread and wine remain, their substance is changed into the body and blood of Christ. And because the action of Christ is an action once and for all, then the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is once and for all. Permanent.

But it is not only the person of Jesus who is present in the Eucharist. His saving work is also present. In this way, we can talk of the eucharist as the memorial of his sacrifice on the cross. The sacrificial understanding of the eucharist comes from the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: 'this is the blood of the new covenant.' In days gone by the covenant, or mutual relationship between God and his people, was solemnised with ritual sacrifice in which both parties to the covenant shared.

But, in the death of Jesus, a new covenant is sealed. In the sacrificial self-giving of Jesus on the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, God shows his steadfast and faithful love once and for all. The Church is commissioned to 'Do this in remembrance of me.' But this remembering is not mere memory. It is a remembering which renders present the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross under the sacramental signs of bread and wine. The love which is present in the self-offering of Jesus on the cross, and the return of that love by the Father in the resurrection of Jesus is available to us through our celebration of the Eucharist. It is available to us because our own self-offering is joined to the self-offering of the Son and is taken up in his self-offering.

Our celebration of the Eucharist is also an expression of Church unity. Just as one loaf is broken into many from which we all share, so the eucharist is an expression of our unity as Church, particularly our unity with our bishop who is united with the other bishops and with the Pope. We express this unity in our Eucharistic Prayer when we pray for Francis our Pope, and Peter our bishop. But this unity is more than just unity with the Pope and bishops. It is a unity with all of our brothers and sisters. The unity which is expressed in Eucharist should overflow into concern and solicitude for all the other churches, especially those who are poor. The Eucharist is indeed bread for the life of the world.

This is perhaps the heart of the mystery of the Eucharist. This solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ is one of those feasts which seem to highlight our Catholic identity. In the past, we had grand and elaborate celebrations for the feast of Corpus Christi. Processions of the Blessed Sacrament through the streets. Masses of flowers; bank upon bank of candles. Great pageantry.

We do not do this so much anymore. Why not? Yes, our times have changed. As our society has become more pluralistic and less religious, such outward shows seem less appropriate. But our faith has not changed. We still believe that the Eucharist is the body and blood of the risen Jesus under the sign or sacrament of bread and wine. But, perhaps more than ever, the Eucharist is the food and drink of the disciples of Jesus. We are fed, and we are nourished with this food and drink so that we might be the Body of Christ in our world today. Truly, we are fed with the Eucharist so that we might be the life of the world.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Friends, Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God. In a spirit of hospitality, let us pray for the needs of our world and our community.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and all our Church leaders; clergy, lay and religious. Like Melchizedek, may they continue to serve the people of God with faithful and joyful hearts.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for refugees and asylum seekers as we begin Refugee Week. May world communities, and their leaders, welcome persons seeking a safe place to call home and uphold their right to decent living conditions.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the persons in our world who go hungry every day. May our sharing at the Lord's table change us, so we become ever more compassionate. May we share generously with persons who are poor and hungry - not just from our own excess.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for children, and their families, who will be receiving Holy Communion for the first time at this Eucharist. May they celebrate the Eucharist in joy and know the close friendship of Jesus in their hearts. May this parish community grow in our hunger to remain in Christ, and for Christ to remain in us.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for Plenary Council members attending the forthcoming Council and the committees and support people working hard in the background. May their hearts and minds remain open to receive the Holy Spirit in all their prayer, listening and preparation. *(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for loved ones who have gone before us. May they know the joy of Christ's presence forever in the heavenly banquet.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

God of hospitality and abundance, you fill us with living bread. Let us not be satisfied until it is shared, through the power of the Spirit and in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Alleluia, sing to Jesus. W C Dix/R H Prichard. 371
By your priestly power, O risen Lord. J McAuley/ R Connolly. 386
Christians, let us love one another. A Nigro SJ and M Foltz SNJM/ French melody.
206
Gift of finest wheat. O Westendorf/ R E Kreutz 191
I am the bread of life. S Toolan RSM. 204
In remembrance of you. C Willcock SJ. 355
Song of the Lord's supper. M Joncas. 322
Take and eat. J Quinn SJ/ M Joncas. 198
The song of the supper. J Bell. 385
This body will be given for you. C Willcock SJ. 387

AOV1

Gather us together. O. Alstott. 111
I am the bread of life. S Toolan RSM. 49
In the breaking of the bread. B Hurd. 58
We remember. M Haugen. 81
When we eat this bread. M Joncas. 99

AOV2

As grains of wheat. L Rosania. 153
Bread broken, wine shared. R Horner. 155
Feed us now. R Mann. 93
Let us break bread together. American Folk Hymn. 98
May we come to know the Lord. D R Gagnon. 19
Table of plenty. D Schutte. 20
We gather here, O God. O Alstott/ C Smith CFC. 99

AOV4Kids

For the journey. G Holmes. 128
Take and eat. M Russell. 114
The table of God. F P O'Brien. 8
To live like Jesus. M O'Brien/ D Pudney. 160
We live and love your word. K Bates SM. 118

AOVNG

I am the bread of life. Tom Kaczmarek. 72
Jesus, bread of life. Amanda McKenna. 80

CWB

Alleluia, sing to Jesus. William Chatterton Dix. 619
Bread of the world in mercy broken. Reginald Heber. 631
By your priestly power, O risen Lord. James Phillip McAuley. 634
Christians, let us love one another. Fr. A. Nigro/Sr. M. Claudia Folz. 648

Gift of finest wheat. Omar Westendorf. 685
I am the bread of life. Suzanne Toolan. 718
This body will be given for you. Christopher Willcock SJ. 839

CWBII

Alleluia! sing to Jesus! William Chatterton Dix. 449
Bread of life, hope of the world. Bernadette Farrell. 459
Bread of the world in mercy broken. Reginald Heber. 460
By your priestly power, O risen Lord. James Phillip McAuley. 462
Christians, let us love one another. Armand Nigro SJ/M. Claudia Foltz SNJM. 469
Draw near and take. Antiphony of Bennchar, tr. J. M. Neale. 482
Eat this bread, drink this cup. Taizé Community. 484
I am the bread of life. Suzanne Toolan RSM. 509
One bread, one body. John Foley SJ. 579
Seed, scattered and sown. Dan Feiten. 592
Take and eat. James Quinn SJ. 608
Taste and see. Stephen Dean. 609
Taste and see the goodness of the Lord. The Grail. 610
Gift of finest wheat. Omer Westendorf. 651

S&S1

I am the bread of life. John Michael Talbot. 153
Bread for the world. Bernadette Farrell. 157

S&S2

There will be bread. Sarah Hart. 373

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 109: *You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.*
Psalm 109: Christopher Willcock SJ. CWB 114b
Psalm 110 (109): Jenny O'Brien. JOBC pg. 54
You are a priest forever: Tony Alonso. LPC pg. 82

Music selections by Michael Mangan

One body in Christ (TWB) [Communion]
The bread of life (SHOF) [Communion]
In the body of Christ (LCC) [Communion]
In memory of me (LCC) [CHILDREN: Communion]
Given for you (SHOF, CWB II) [CHILDREN: Communion]