

14-2-2023

## The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ Corpus Christi - 11 June 2023

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### Recommended Citation

Tedesco, Joe. "The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ Corpus Christi - 11 June 2023." *Pastoral Liturgy* 53, no. 2 (2022): 1-7.  
<https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol53/iss2/26>

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**11 June 2023**

## The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ Corpus Christi

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

### Introduction

Today we celebrate the feast of the living presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. The readings we hear today help inform us of the richness of God's provision that is found in this mystery.

### Penitential Act

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

Lord Jesus, you are the Bread from Heaven. Lord have mercy.

You are the cup of salvation. Christ have mercy.

You draw us around the table to be one with you. 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.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

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.

### **Acknowledgement**

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

## **First Reading**

### **Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a**

The passage from Deuteronomy reminds the people of God that the Lord cares for them. They are encouraged to remember that God provided for them in their time of need and did so in new ways, for God gave them food that their ancestors did not know.

## **Responsorial Psalm**

### **Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20**

*Praise the Lord, Jerusalem. Or alleluia.*

A song of praise for our God, who provides a place of security and nourishment.

## **Second Reading**

### **1 Corinthians 10:16-17**

Though we are many, we are formed into one body through the sharing of the body of Christ.

## **Gospel Reading**

### **John 6:51-58**

Leading up to the passage of today's Gospel reading John 6, Jesus has evoked the imagery of manna provided to the Jewish ancestors in the desert. Like that provision, Jesus is a gift from God, given freely to satisfy the needs of many in ways that go beyond any blessing that has come before. Jesus is the 'living bread from heaven'.

## **Reflection**

Following this Sunday, the liturgical season returns to Ordinary Time and, with it, a return to Matthew as the main source of the gospel readings. Before that, we have today one final passage taken from John. John's gospel is rich in symbolism, and images such as bread, which features in today's reading, are presented with multiple layers of meaning, intending to convey rich layers of God's blessings. Today we hear

of Jesus being 'living bread'. This and the similar 'bread of life' used in the verses immediately preceding today's passage are the only place in the Gospel where such phrasing is used. However, the language is drawing from common knowledge on two levels.

Firstly, is the common universal implication. We all need food to survive and bread in many cultures and certainly in Jesus' world represents the most basic staple. Life is simply not possible without at least basic sustenance, and bread represents that. Earlier in John's Gospel we see similar language in reference to water. When engaging with the famous scene of the woman at the well, Jesus again suggests that what he provides is 'living water' that whoever drinks, will never become thirsty (4:10-14). In both instances Jesus is engaging with a most basic need. We all know what thirst and hunger is like. Some, unfortunately, know it all too well and to the degree where mortal life is at stake. Such symbolic framing suggests the depth of need that Jesus' presence is to satisfy.

All living creatures have fundamental needs that, if not met, mean they do not thrive. Without food and water, we hasten toward physical death. But there is a pressing need just as fundamentally important that, though not as obvious, is still just as urgent. Without 'bread of life' and 'living water' we hasten toward death just as real, in fact, more total than the familiar experience of physical death. Whoever eats of 'this bread' that Jesus speaks of will live forever. Whoever drinks 'the living water' has eternal life. Jesus is taking familiar needs and attempting to draw our attention upward to more substantive even if hidden needs. It is not always perceived in the same way that our bodily hunger or thirst might be, but this need is just as real. Our existence is material, but stretches beyond mere physicality and, like those gathered who question Jesus in today's Gospel scene, and like the woman at the well, we sense it but don't know where to go to find satiation.

Turning to the first reading, we see important language that reappears in John's account later. The text from Deuteronomy is providing a recollection for the chosen people of important elements of the story of the exodus from Egypt. It stresses the Lord's care and provision for the people of God as they went 'through a vast and dreadful wilderness'. We see in this short text something repeated often in Deuteronomy; 'remember' and 'do not forget' such things. There are a few reasons we are to hold on to such things and ensure we do not forget. Firstly, though the accounts of the exodus are from many millennia ago, we are still wandering in what can feel like hostile environments and we can be vulnerable to many ills in our life. The wilderness was a real experience for Israel, but it is one that has been re-experienced in many ways since and continues to be our experience. Even now, though assured of God's victory in Christ over all sin and brokenness, we live the life of the pilgrim Church, moving from slavery toward the promised land.

Thus, we can still feel the pinch of dread that it is to be in the 'wilderness' where 'fiery serpents and scorpions' threaten ('fiery' is a translation of the Hebrew *šārāp* which is the name of a particularly poisonous, therefore, life threatening snake). But, in Jesus, just like Israel during the exodus, we are given provision from God. Jesus evoking such imagery as being akin to the 'bread from heaven' that featured as part

of the Lord's provision in the desert is reminding us that Jesus is the ongoing, ever-present provision of God wherever we are in our journey – and this is especially manifest in the Eucharist.

However, we are also called to 'remember' and 'not forget' because, conversely, we can sometimes become blind to just how much we need God. The words of Deuteronomy were recorded and retold through the centuries because Israel had a habit of forgetting. When times seemed good, when it seemed that Israel could take care of itself, these were the most dangerous times and the prophets attest to this often. Israel had a habit of forgetting that they only exist because they are God's beloved people and, if they depended on their own strength alone, would ultimately fail. In a sense, we can become easily blind to the spiritual wilderness that we are in.

In our contemporary experience, we can become so easily comfortable in our accomplishments and ability to satiate our seemingly every need. It is an almost clichéd notion that we have become masters of our own distraction. Comfortable in our ability to manipulate our lives and our world in all sorts of ways. To not want for anything, yet, never able to be entirely satisfied either. Of course, there are many who do not experience such agency. But, for many, to recognise the genuine need that we all have can be so easily masked by the plethora of material goods.

This and much more is captured in today's feast. The Body and Blood of Christ is the very sustenance of God for life's journey. The ongoing celebration where we are frequently called to 'remember' is also an opportunity to connect with our needs, to recognise just how much we actually do need God in our lives. It is so easy to become distracted, so easy to feel that the only nourishment we need is that which fills our actual bellies. Jesus declaring that he is the 'bread of life' is not only a statement of where we receive our nourishment, but that we actually need such nourishment at all – something that is evidently easy to forget.



# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

As we gather around the table to share the Body and Blood of Christ, we bring our needs with confidence in God's hospitality.

## Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church that as they lead celebrations of the Eucharist they may always be open to the needs and cares of their communities.

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

We pray for the Church in Australia. Through sharing in the Eucharist may we be strengthened as we work towards the Synod and the implementation of the Plenary Council.

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

We pray for the leaders of the world. Bring them to understand that every human person has a right to sit peacefully around the table of life and share sufficient food.

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

We pray for the community gathered around this sacred table. May we always appreciate the love that God has shown through the eucharistic food that makes us one in the body and blood of Christ.

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

We pray for those who are suffering illness of mind and body and particularly those who suffer eating disorders. May the food of life bring them to peace and health.

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

We pray for those without a table at which to sit and share love and hospitality. May they find support through the goodness of those who are able to share generously from their abundance.

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

We pray for families who do not sit and eat together. May they find the determination to share love and food in a way that brings their family together in peace.

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

## Conclusion

As we share this Eucharist, we know that God's love is beyond our understanding and that God will provide for us our daily bread and all that we need to live the life of the Gospel. Therefore, we make our prayer through the power of the Spirit, in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

**Amen.**

## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

### The Body and Blood of Christ, Year A (11 June 2023)

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
Adoro te, devote				617		388
Alleluia! Sing to Jesus	191			619	449	371
An upper room did our Lord prepare				620	309	187
Bread of life, hope of the world					459	
Bread of the world in mercy broken				631	460	
By your priestly power, O risen Lord				634	462	386
Christians, let us love one another				648	469	206
Come, behold, the bread of angels					396a	
Draw near and take the Body of the Lord				668	482	
Eat this bread, drink this cup					484	205
For the journey			128			
Gift of finest wheat				685	651	191
Godhead here in hiding				696	162	
God with hidden majesty						388
How blest are we who share this bread				716		
Humbly we adore thee				709	507	
I am the bread of life (Toolan)	49			718	509	204
In the breaking of the bread	58					
In remembrance of you					359	355
Let all mortal flesh keep silence					533	190
Now let us from this table rise				753	560	
O God, we hear your story			118		571	
O Lord, at your first Eucharist you prayed				773	578	
One bread, one body	129				579	193
Praise, O Zion, Christ our glory					396b	
Song of the Lord's Supper					311	322
Soul of my Saviour				811	164	
Take and eat (Joncas)					608	198
Take and eat (Russell)			114		117	
Taste and see					609	34
Taste and see the goodness of the Lord (Herry)					610	
Taste and see the goodness of the Lord (Willcock)				595	611	33
The table of God			8			
This body will be given for you				839		387
We gather here, O God		99				
We remember	81					446

Title	AOVNG	S&S1	S&S2
Bread for the world		157	
Come to the table (Angotti)	32		
Come to the table (Burland)	33		
I am the bread of life (Kaczmarek)	72		
I am the bread of life (Talbot)		153	
Jesus, bread of life	80		
There will be bread			373

## **Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy**

Psalm 147: *Praise the Lord, Jerusalem./Alleluia!*

	CWB	JOBA	LPA
Psalm 147	321	pg. 52	pg. 78

## **Music selections by Michael Mangan**

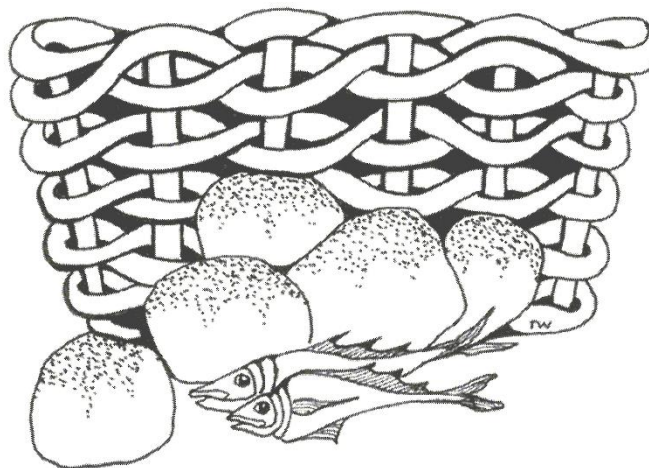
**One body in Christ** (TWB) [Communion]

**The bread of life** (SHOF) [Communion]

**In memory of me** (TWML, LCC) [CHILDREN: Communion]

**Given for you** (SHOF) [CHILDREN: Communion]

**In the body of Christ** (LCC) [Communion]



**They all ate and were filled.**