

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
June 23, 2019
“Inclusion”

Gen 14:18-20
1Cor 11:23-26
Lk 9:11-17

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Most of us have someone whom we dislike. There is always someone we don't wish to be around. Sometimes, it's because that person can do us harm in some way – Sometimes, it's because they make us feel uncomfortable for some reason – Sometimes, it's because of some irrational, emotional prejudice based on their color, their race, their religion, their politics – or even their social class or general appearance.

Except for those who can actually harm us, we do ourselves a disservice whenever we exclude people from our lives. Because there is much we can learn from every human person. Moreover, our discomfort often means that there is something amiss in our own life or heart!

Fortunately, the one place where everyone is welcome is in the Catholic Church. Even the most excluded can find a place and a safe haven to worship. We are all sinners; we are all imperfect with many faults. Yet, here we are reminded that God loves us all – that God wants the salvation of everyone – and that the only disqualifying thing is our refusal to change our hearts, reform our lives, and become all that God wants us to be!

The early Church had this problem of exclusion in the city of Corinth. It was the custom in those days to gather for a large meal before celebrating the Eucharist. Everyone brought their own food, but there was no sharing – it was no “potluck”. The wealthy ate sumptuously – while the poor had only simple fare or nothing at all!

Consequently, St. Paul chastised them severely in the passage that immediately precedes the reading for today. Then, he recounts for them what the Eucharist truly is. The Bread and Wine are really the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ which were given up out of love in atonement for our sins! Therefore, whenever Christians eat the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist, they proclaim the death of Jesus until he comes again to take us to the eternal banquet in the kingdom of heaven!

Therefore, at the Eucharist, there can be no divisions, no separation, no hatred, rancor, animosity, or prejudice! There can only be unity in the Body and Blood of Jesus in whom we are all one!

Moreover, in the passage which follows today's scripture, Paul tells us that if we eat or drink the Eucharist unworthily – we become guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ!

In the Gospel selection, Jesus is indiscriminate in feeding the multitude of people. Jesus welcomed everyone. People could only exclude themselves of their own free will. The love and compassion of Jesus were universal because they were the love and compassion of God Himself.

The feeding of the 5000 contains Eucharistic overtones: A prayer of thanksgiving, bread and fish, blessed and broken, passed out to everyone with a marvelous overabundance – and leftovers gathered for the future! This whole marvelous event points to the ultimate gift of Jesus at the Last Supper and on Calvary!

In the reading from the Book of Genesis, Melchizedek prefigures Christ, 2000 years beforehand. He is a priest; he is the king of Salem, of peace – He offers bread and wine in praise and thanksgiving – He gives glory to God for all that God has done. And, in return, to honor God, Abram gives him a tenth of everything!

Brothers and Sisters, all too often we forget that the Eucharist is a great prayer of thanksgiving! Too often we forget that we must be a grateful people in the depths of our being. God has given us so much – God has blessed us with life here and the promise of life forever in the kingdom. It's sad that we forget this so often and, instead, keep asking for what we think we need.

So, let us pray, that we become people of gratitude – May we include every other person in our hearts as God includes them – And may we get beyond the sins of exclusion that deny our unity in Jesus Christ!

Amen.

June 23, 2019

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