

CORPUS CHRISTI (C) THE BREAD OF LIFE

Last week we celebrated the solemnity of the Blessed Trinity, a mystery difficult to understand. Today too, we celebrate another important feast which is unique to our Catholic faith, and requires great faith in order to understand, the solemnity of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This feast distinguishes the Catholic Church from all other religions, especially the other Christian denominations.

The Catholic Church believes that after consecration, the bread and wine cease to be ordinary bread and wine; they become the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. We believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but the other Christians say it is a representation of Christ, or a symbol.

We need food to grow and survive, and without it we die. This is why the Israelites complained when they were on their way to Canaan, and they even preferred being in Egypt to eat onion and meat as slaves, to being free people starving in the desert;(Ex.16:1-3).

Jesus knew that the five thousand or more people He preached to needed food to nourish the body, so He fed them with the five loaves and the two fish. But He was also preparing their minds to understand that the spiritual food He was going to provide is more important than the physical one.

Jesus told His disciples that His body is real food, and His Blood is real drink, and whoever eats His Body and drinks His Blood shall have everlasting life, and if one does not eat His Body and drink His Blood, there shall be no life in him; (Jn.6:51-57). This became a reality when He celebrated the Passover with His disciples. He established the New Covenant with His own Blood; (Lk.22:19-20).

The priesthood of Melchizedek was a prefiguration of the priesthood of Jesus. He offered bread and wine to God and blessed Abraham, the father of the Israelites, and our father in faith. Jesus is the eternal High Priest who offered one perfect sacrifice once and for all to save humanity. Even though Jesus emphasized that one has to eat His Body to have life, St. Paul reminds us that we cannot just eat it without being in a state of

grace. He tells us that there is no doubt that the bread and wine truly become the Body and Blood of Christ, so we should examine ourselves before partaking in it. He made it clear that he received the message from the Lord Himself. He revealed that many are weak, some are sick, and even died because we do not receive the Body and Blood of Christ worthily; (1Cor.11:27-30).

We are well aware that even though food gives us energy and strength, at the same time if it is not well-prepared or if we eat it anyhow, we can become sick. The spiritual food poison we contract in eating the Communion unworthily is worse than ordinary food. This is because we kill the soul.

The way and manner some of us receive Communion may make one ask whether we believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. There is no reverence in our posture and gestures. Many of us receive in our palms, but how many pay attention to the particle which may remain in the palm or finger? Do we want to see miracles before we believe that the Communion we receive is the real Body and Blood of Christ? In fact, there are many credible documented miracles of the Eucharist all over the world. How strong is our faith in the Eucharist? Why do you receive Communion every day or every week?

St. Paul tells us “as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes”. How do we do that? It is done by our attitude towards the Lord in receiving His Body, and adoring Him during Eucharistic Adoration. But how many Catholics realize that one of the important ways of expressing our faith in the Communion we receive every day is spending time before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament? Jesus wants to feed us body and soul, so it is important for us to have faith in Him and have time for Him. Those who listened to His word were fed as well.