

Corpus Christi C

First Reading Genesis 14:18-20

Melchizedek king of Salem brought bread and wine; he was a priest of God Most High. He pronounced this blessing: "Blessed be Abraham by God Most High, creator of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High for handing over your enemies to you." And Abraham gave him a tithe of everything.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

This is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you: that on the same night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and thanked God for it and broke it, and he said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me." In the same way he took the cup after supper, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me." Until the Lord comes, therefore, every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming his death.

Gospel Luke 9:11-17

Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing. It was late afternoon when the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the people away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and food; for we are in a lonely place here." He replied, "Give them something to eat yourselves." But they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go ourselves and buy food for all these people." For there were about five thousand men. But he said to his disciples, "Get them to sit down in parties of about fifty." They did so and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the crowd. They all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps remaining were collected they filled twelve baskets.

Meditation

This celebration originated in the diocese of Liège (1246) on the basis of revelations of Juliana of Cornillon. It was accepted with such enthusiasm throughout Europe that in 1264 it was promulgated for the entire Latin Church. From the beginning the feast commemorated both the body and the blood of the Lord. This original unity has been restored in the post-Vatican II celebration.

Human beings are so essentially physical that even our language of the spirit derives from our bodies. To be a member of an organization requires that we be incorporated into that organization. Publications of societies are said to be organs of these groups. Jesus and his Church have a keen grasp of this reality in the celebrations we call sacraments. Sacraments address themselves to the Church which is Christ's Body and to individual members of that Body. The source and summit of all the Church's life is professed to be the celebration of the eucharist where the Body of Christ partakes of what it is. On this day we celebrate our identity as Christ's Body. On this day we profess our belief that the life-giving and life supporting blood which flows among us is Christ's very life. On this day we direct our attention to the symbol which makes all other symbols possible.

The earthly language of bodies and blood fills the scriptures. But those same scriptures proclaim that the pouring forth of blood is unto the nourishment of God's people. Flesh, blood, bread and wine are the products of destructive processes which bring them to human tables as food to sustain a family. Christ immersed himself in those processes which brought him to the table of the human family as the one food and drink which changes the eater into the eaten. In him we truly become what we eat and drink.