

Corpus Christi - A
Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a;
I Corinthians 10:16-17;
John 6:51-58
Little Flower - 6/22/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, commonly called Corpus Christi, which means *Body of Christ*.

During the Exodus, God provided the Israelites with manna and water in the desert foreshadowing Jesus gift of his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. In today's Gospel, Jesus said, "*I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.*" When his listeners were disturbed by his words, Jesus not only did not back down but also restated them even more forcefully: "*Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.*" St. Paul reminds the Corinthians and us that the cup of blessing we bless and the bread we break are a participation in the body and blood of Christ and make us one body in Christ.

To understand the Eucharist, we have to understand it in relation to the Holy Spirit's presence, power, and activity in salvation history. The opening verses of the Bible proclaim, "*In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while the rûah'êlôhîm or the Spirit of God swept over the waters*" [Genesis 1:1-2]. The Hebrew phrase rûah'êlôhîm represents the vivifying power of God. At the Annunciation, the angel told Mary, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God*" [Lk. 1:35].

St. Augustine referred to Pentecost as the birth of the Church. "*And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues...*" [Acts 2:2-4]. At every Eucharist, immediately before the consecration, we invoke the same vivifying power of God: "Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you: by the same spirit graciously make holy these gifts we have brought to you for consecration, that they may become the Body and Blood of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ..." [Eucharistic Prayer III]. At every Eucharist, the same Holy Spirit who swept over the waters at creation, who came upon Mary at the Incarnation, and who descended upon and empowered the apostles at Pentecost makes holy the bread and wine that becomes the Body and Blood of Christ.

My brothers and sisters, at every Eucharist we witness a miracle. Simple elements of bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Bread ceases to be bread and becomes the Body of Christ. Wine ceases to be wine and becomes the Blood of Christ. They still look, taste, and feel like bread and wine, but they no longer are bread and wine. To see the miracle, we have to look with eyes of faith. At the same time, when we receive the Eucharist, we believe that we too are transformed into the body of Christ: "*Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*"