

Corpus Christi - C
Genesis 14:18-20;
I Corinthians 11:23-26;
Luke 9:11b-17
Little Flower - 5/29/16

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, commonly called Corpus Christi. All three readings reveal different dimensions of the meaning of Eucharist.

The encounter of Abram with Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, prefigured the gift of the Eucharist. Melchizedek brought out bread and wine. From earliest times, bread and wine have been part of worship, and Jesus chose bread and wine for the Eucharist. I would suggest bread and wine were chosen for their symbolism. Bread represents basic nourishment. Wine symbolizes celebration. The Eucharist provides us with basic nourishment for our daily Christian lives but also anticipates the heavenly banquet.

The story of Abram's encounter with Melchizedek also gives us the basis of tithing: "*Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*" Since all that we are and have are God's gifts to us directly or indirectly, our worship of God is not complete unless we give back to God directly or indirectly through others a portion of the gifts God has given us. Stewardship is part of worship; stewardship is part of Eucharist. This is why we bring your financial gifts to the altar with the bread and wine. They symbolize your stewardship.

Likewise, the miracle of the loaves and fish in today's Gospel also prefigured the Eucharist. In John, Chapter 6, the miracle of the loaves and fish was the jumping off point for Jesus' teaching on the Eucharist. Also, Jesus used Eucharistic language when he multiplied the loaves and fish: "*Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.*" In today's Eucharistic Prayer, we will pray, "...he himself took bread, and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to the disciples...."

The twelve wicker baskets left over suggest the superabundance of God's gifts to us. In leaving us the Eucharist, Jesus gave us the greatest gift of all, the gift of his body and blood, the gift of his life and his love. Fr. Edward Dhanis argued that instituting the Eucharist, Jesus wanted to love us as no one ever had or ever would.

Today's second reading is St. Paul's narrative of the institution of the Eucharist. This is only one of two instances when Paul used the solemn formula: "*I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you.*" The other instance was Jesus' resurrection. In Paul's eyes, these were both core Christian beliefs. Faith in the Eucharist and faith in the Resurrection are both essential parts of Christian faith. Clearly Jesus intended the continuation of the celebration of the Eucharist when he said, "*Do this in remembrance of me,*" and "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.*"

My brothers and sisters, as Catholics, we believe in Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist. We believe bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ sacramentally. One reason we also ask you to bring the bread and wine to the altar is because we want the bread and wine to symbolize us asking to be transformed. In other words, the Eucharist not transforms bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. It also transforms us into the Body of Christ. As Paul wrote, "*Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf*" [I Cor. 10:17]. Transformed into the Body of Christ, we are empowered to pour out our lives in love and service to all.