

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. Today is commonly called Corpus Christi, which means *Body of Christ*. Today's Solemnity actually combines two feasts: Corpus Christi, which was always the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, and the Most Precious Blood of our Lord, which was celebrated on July 1.

Today's second reading gives us St. Paul's narrative of the institution of the Eucharist. Both the bread and wine offered by Melchizedek in the Old Testament and the New Testament multiplication of the loaves and fish foreshadow the gift of the Eucharist.

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians was probably written sometime between 53 and 56 A.D. Twice in this letter, St. Paul uses a solemn formula to hand on to the Corinthians what he himself had received. In today's reading, he introduces his narrative of the institution of the Eucharist with "*I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you...*" In chapter 15, he introduces Jesus' resurrection with "*For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received....*" [3].

As Catholics, we believe that the resurrection is the most important doctrine of our faith. Today's reading suggests that approximately twenty years after Jesus' death and resurrection, the Christian Church already put belief in the Eucharist almost on par with belief in the resurrection of Jesus. Today many Christians, even many Catholics, who recognize that belief in the resurrection of Jesus is central to Christian and Catholic faith do not recognize that belief in the Eucharist is almost equally central to Christian faith. Authentic Catholic faith believes in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and believes that Christ's sacrificial death on the cross is made real and present among us each time we celebrate the Eucharist.

The sacrifice of Melchizedek and the multiplication of the loaves and fish foreshadowed the gift of the Eucharist. The word *Eucharist* means thanksgiving. The Eucharist is the primary way in which we give thanks to God for God's gifts to us, especially the gift of Jesus Christ who makes all love possible. However, it is not enough to celebrate the Eucharist: we also have to live the Eucharist. In living the Eucharist, we also thank God for his gifts to us.

My brothers and sisters, in the reading from Genesis, after Melchizedek offered the bread and wine and blessed Abram, Abram gave him a tenth of everything. In other words, if God gives us gifts, God wants us to give at least a portion of our gifts back to him. Stewardship of God's gifts in the broadest sense of the term is one way we give back to God. Sharing our gifts—our time, talent, and treasure—with others is one way we thank God for those gifts. In the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fish, after Jesus blessed and broke the loaves and the fish, he gave them to his disciples to distribute. In other words, although Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish, he needed the apostles to distribute them to more than 5000 people. Another way we give thanks to God for all God's gifts to us is serving as the hands and feet of Jesus in the world today.