

Corpus Christi - C  
Genesis 14:18-20;  
I Corinthians 11:23-26;  
Luke 9:11b-17  
Little Flower - 6/23/19

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*. Both the bread and wine offered by Melchizedek in the Old Testament and Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and fish in the Gospel foreshadow the gift of the Eucharist.

In today's reading from Genesis, Abram encountered Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High. The word *Eucharist* means thanksgiving. Blessing Abram and God, Melchizedek brought out bread and wine to give thanks for Abram's victory over the enemy. 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 other interesting thing about this short reading is that it introduces tithing. Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything. Since all that we are and have are God's gifts to us directly or indirectly, our worship of God, our thanksgiving to 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.

In today's Gospel, Jesus multiplies the five loaves and two fish and feeds five thousand men, not counting women and children. We know that Jesus intended the miracle of the loaves and fish to prefigure the gift of the Eucharist because of the Eucharistic language in the passage: "*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.*" With the miracle of the loaves and fish, Jesus fed the people physically. In the Eucharist, he feeds us spiritually.

In this passage, we should note two other points. Jesus gave the multiplied loaves and fish to the disciples to distribute. In other words, they became the hands and feet of Jesus. Today we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus not only in our celebration of the Eucharist but also in serving the needs of others. Second, the twelve wicker baskets of leftover fragments suggest the superabundance of God's gifts to us.

Today's second reading is St. Paul's narrative of the institution of the Eucharist. This is one of only 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 other words, in Paul's eyes, these were both core Christian beliefs. Faith in the Eucharist and faith in the Resurrection are both essential elements of Christian faith.

When Jesus said, "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes,*" he was emphasizing the Eucharist as a sacrifice. Whenever we celebrate Eucharist, Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross is made present in our midst, and we join ourselves to Christ, offering through, with, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory to God, our Almighty Father. However, at the core of our faith in the Eucharist is faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

My brothers and sisters, at every Sunday Eucharist, we invite you to bring the bread and wine to the altar because the bread and wine also symbolizes our willingness to be transformed by the Eucharist. The Eucharist not only 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 and called to pour out our lives in love and service to all.