

Corpus Christi A

*Though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf.
(1 Co 10:17)*



First Reading

Deuteronomy 8:2-3.14-16

Moses said to the people: "Remember how the Lord your God led you for forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, to test you and know your inmost heart – whether you would keep his commandments or not. He humbled you, he made you feel hunger, he fed you with manna which neither you nor your fathers had known, to make you understand that man does not live on bread alone but that man lives on everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Do not then forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery: who guided you through this vast and dreadful wilderness, a land of fiery serpents, scorpions, thirst; who in this waterless place brought you water from the hardest rock; who in this wilderness fed you with manna that your fathers had not known."

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ. The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf.

Gospel

John 6:51-58

Jesus said to the Jews: "I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world."

Then the Jews started arguing with one another: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they said. Jesus replied: "I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever."

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 Sunday we celebrate our identity as Christ's Body. On this Sunday we profess our belief that the life-giving and life supporting blood which flows among us is Christ's very life. On this Sunday 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.