

CORPUS CHRISTI - The Eucharist is the true Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ

Dear brothers and sisters, last Sunday we celebrated the solemnity of the Blessed Trinity. We dwelled on what manner of God is our God? We concluded that God is love. In the light of this, we know that the senseless and unjust killing of another human being, as George Floyd was killed, is unacceptable because it is evil and contrary to the Love who loved us first. The Law of the Most High expressly forbids murder: "Thou shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 5:17).

Today we will dwell on a hitherto unprecedented dimension of God's love. He gave us himself as our food for eternal life. He gave us Himself with his own hands. The key verse is - "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" (John 6:53).

Who is this Son of Man? He is the Lord Jesus, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity? He is the incarnate Word of God. How can we eat his flesh and drink his blood? We eat his flesh and drink his blood in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. During the institution of the Eucharist at the last Supper, "Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body" (Matthew 26:26). Then, the Lord took a cup of wine, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:27-28, cf. Exodus 24:8). So that when we receive the Eucharist we are receiving the Lord, body, soul and divinity. The word "eat and drink" in the context of the Eucharist is not metaphorical. It is real. The Greek word used for eating in the in the Eucharistic discourse is *-trophein-* which refers to a "kind of eating, almost a gnawing or chewing (see John 6:54, 56, 57, 58)."¹ Through St Paul the Holy Spirit gave the same message in the first Letter to the Corinthians: The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is this not a

¹ Scott Hahn, *The Word of the Father, Sunday Bible Reflection on the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ* (Steubenville, OH: St Paul's Center for Biblical Theology, 2020).

participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). We can see how the Eucharist fulfils what the Lord said through Moses: One lives by every word that come forth from the mouth of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:3). Jesus is the Word of God in the fullest sense. This Word became flesh, dwelt among us, and gave himself to us as food and drink. This is why the sacrament of his Body and Blood is the source and summit of our Christian life.²

The solemnity of Corpus Christi brings to the fore this message of supreme importance. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Second person of the Blessed Trinity, born of Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, died and risen is present in the Blessed Eucharist. After the consecration, the bread and wine are no longer bread and wine but the body and blood, soul and divinity of the risen Lord. We cannot approach the Eucharist in a casual or careless way. Receiving Holy Communion is not a matter of a civil right, or what I do because everybody is doing it. No! It is a matter that calls for deep faith, holiness, reverence and decorum that is due to God. I cannot receive him if I am in a state of mortal sin. I

² Vatican Council II, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, SC 10, (4 December 1963)

have to go to confession first. I cannot receive him if I had not made my first confession and first communion. If I am a non-Catholic, I must first prepare myself through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. This helps me to discern the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. If I am living with a spouse without being married in the Church or in a second marriage without annulment that I should not be receiving the Holy Eucharist. I must first regularize my marriage. This applies as well to people living in a homosexual relationship or in unconfessed habitual sin. And even when I am not in a state of sin, I cannot talk, joke around, giggle or even sing when I still have the host in my mouth. Also, any leftovers, be it BODY OR BLOOD cannot be thrown away or dumped into the sink or trash cans.

WHY DID THE LORD TAKE ALL THE TROUBLE OF MAKING HIMSELF AVAILABLE IN A SIMPLE PIECE OF BREAD?

It is highly fitting that Christ should have wanted to remain present to his Church in this unique way. Since Christ was about to take his departure from his own disciples in his visible form, he wanted to give us his sacramental presence. Since he was about to

offer himself on the cross to save us, he wanted us to have a memorial of the love with which he loved us "to the end. Even to the giving of his life. In the Eucharistic presence CHRIST remains mysterious in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us (Galatians 2.20), he remains under signs that express and communicate this love" (CCC 1380 see John 13:1, Gal 2:20).

Sometimes, we wonder whether it is really true that the piece of host we receive is the body and blood of the Lord. "That in this sacrament is the true Body of Christ and his true Blood is something that 'cannot be apprehended by the senses,' says St. Thomas, 'but only by faith, which relies on divine authority.' In a commentary on Luke 22:19 ('This is my body which is given for you), St. Cyril said, "Do not doubt whether this is true, but rather receive the words of the Savior in faith, for since he is the truth, he cannot lie" (CCC 1381).³ Changing one existing substance into another substance is not hard for the GOD who created the whole universe out of nothing. The change God brings about during the consecration is called transubstantiation.⁴ The substances of bread and wine

³ St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III,75,1; cf. Paul VI, MF 18; St. Cyril of Alexandria, In Luc. 22,19:PG.

⁴ It is not consubstantiation or transignification.

change into the substances of body and blood of Christ after the invocation of the Holy Spirit on the bread and wine.⁵ The accidents, i.e the appearance and form of the bread and wine remain but the substance changes.

IS IT TRULY YOU MY LORD WHO IS THERE IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT?

How is the risen Lord present in the consecrated wafer? The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend."⁶ In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained."⁷ "This presence is called 'real' which is not intended to exclude other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present" (CCC 1374).

⁵ This prayer of invocation is called Epiclesis.

⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III,73,3c.

⁷ Council of Trent (1551): DS 1651.

