**The Body and Blood of Christ**

June 14, 2020

Someone once asked a question about the best thing to bring to a dinner that you were invited to share. One answer was to bring a bottle of wine, another answer was to bring a dessert, but these were not the correct answer. The best thing to bring to a meal that you have been invited to share is hunger. I think that this applies especially to the meal of the Lord's supper, the Mass. We have been created with a hunger for God. For Catholics that hunger is often satisfied in the celebration of the Lord's supper and the reception of Holy Communion, the Body, and Blood of Christ. One gift of the Covid19 restrictions is a reappreciation of the many things we have all taken for granted, human contact, peace of mind, and knowing that we are safe. Restrictions on coming to church have given most of us a reappreciation and hunger for the Eucharist, which is the best gift we can bring to God's holy table.

It is important to remember on this feast that the God that Jesus called Father has been feeding His people for a long time, as we heard in today's first reading. From the garden of Eden, lush with every kind of food to eat, to the survival food of manna in the desert on their trek to the promised land, God has been feeding His people's bodies and souls. The people Jesus preached to in today's gospel truly believed that. But when He said that He, Himself was now the living bread from heaven that must be eaten, they objected. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked. A perfectly reasonable question which Jesus finally answered at the last supper. Jesus took bread and wine and said, "this is my body…this is my blood." Nowhere does Jesus say that this is a symbol or mere reminder. In His graphic language, He says, I am here present, personally, and completely for you, forever. The consistent teaching of the church is that the whole person of Christ is real and present in the Eucharist, body, blood, soul, and divinity.

What Jesus did at the last supper still happens today at every Mass. For some of us, Christ's presence in the Eucharist may seem more real in the grandeur of a Cathedral or the celebrations of Christmas and Easter. For others, Christ's presence in the Eucharist may seem more real in the simplicity of an early morning mass in a monastery or parish church. Personal preferences and styles of worship aside, we can't forget that the Eucharist celebrated and received is essentially food to be eaten, a presence we carry in our souls to strengthen us on our journey to God together as God's people. Receiving Christ, we are to go out, and with His love, touch the lives of people. Commenting on today's feast, Fr. Desmond Knowles says: "We are to be Christ's healing presence, the helping hand, the voice of sympathy, and the words of encouragement when they are needed. In this way, we will be shaped and formed by what we celebrate." That is why the Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life.

**Fr. Valentine**

Scripture Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/061420.cfm>