



June 19, 2022

## The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ— Ordinary Time

*Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God... Luke 9:11*



Dear Friends,

The Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh (who recently died) once reflected on the significance of bread. *"When I hold a piece of bread, I look at it, and sometimes I smile at it. The piece of bread is an ambassador of the cosmos offering nourishment and support. Looking deeply into the piece of bread, I see the sunshine, the clouds, the great earth. Without the sunshine, no wheat can grow. Without the clouds, there is no rain for the wheat to grow. Without the great earth, nothing can grow. That is why the piece of bread that I hold in my hand is a wonder of life. It is there for all of us. We have to be there for it."*

For St Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) all of creation was a sacrament revealing the true presence of God. An early biographer of Francis wrote, *"fields and vineyards, rocks and woods, and all the beauties of the field, flowing springs and blooming gardens, earth and fire, air and wind: all these he urged to the love of God and to willing service."* St Francis had a deep sense of the presence of the Christ in all things of creation.

To know Christ in his human form, is to know that God is in all created reality. And to see God in the Eucharist is to see God in creation. Once, the mystic, Angela of Foligno (1185-1260) was at Mass. And at the elevation of the Eucharist bread, she became overwhelmed with the sense of God's presence. She exclaimed, *"I beheld and contemplated the whole of creation...And my soul in an excess of wonder cried out: 'This world is pregnant with God!' Wherefore, I understood how small is the whole of creation...but the power of God fills it all to overflowing."* The idea of an earth "pregnant with God" tells us we are nurtured by a love that gives birth to life. When Christ gives us the meal of the Eucharist, he is giving us a way to see the connection of all things.

Many of the U.S. Bishops are worried that Catholics no longer believe in *"the real presence of Christ"* in the Eucharist. They are spending tens of millions of dollars to promote a "Eucharistic revival." For me their concern is misplaced. It feels that they can only believe that Christ is "truly present" in the Eucharist Bread. This reflects a static sense of Eucharist. Christ is trapped in the bread, a prisoner of the tabernacle, and to be put on display in a golden monstrance.

The dynamic presence of Christ in the sharing of the sacrificial meal takes a back seat to a more Medieval preoccupation. The concern of how bread and wine is changed, takes precedence over how those who share in the Eucharistic meal are changed. However, Jesus urges us to eat and drink, and then become nourishment and life for the world just as he did. His is not a static presence but a living one.

The real problem is not whether we believe that Christ is "truly present" in bread and wine. But more basically, do we believe that the Risen Christ dwells with us, in our lives, and in the natural world of creation? Does the Body of Christ move us to contemplate God in one another and creation? If so, how can we say, "yes/ Amen" to receiving communion without an active concern for the poor and the ecological devastation of the planet? There is a big disconnect if we can see Christ in the bread, but not see a connection between everyone and everything.

Today the Church gives us the Feast of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ and asks us to contemplate the presence of Christ in Eucharist; in us, his risen body, and in the physical body of creation. Let us be life for the world!

Peace,

*Fr Ron*

*Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: [www.anne.church](http://www.anne.church)*