

EAT MY FLESH, DRINK MY BLOOD

By Al Mansfield

CORPUS CHRISTI

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16

Psalms 147

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Sequence

John 6:51-58

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Today on Corpus Christi we honor the Lord Jesus in his Eucharistic Presence. Some recent surveys have shown that an alarmingly high percentage of Catholics - about 67% - do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. May the Lord revive again a lively faith in the great gift we celebrate today.

DEUTERONOMY

In our first reading, Moses is telling the people to *remember* - to remember the guidance of the Lord for 40 years in the desert; to remember their being tested by affliction; to remember the Lord feeding them with manna, "to show you that not by bread alone does one live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord."

Moses continues by telling them to remember their exodus from slavery in Egypt; to remember the Lord guiding and protecting them in the desert filled with serpents and scorpions; to remember the Lord giving them water from the rock; and once again, Moses reminds them of the manna in the desert.

God's word is here telling us also not to forget all that the Lord has done for us!

1 CORINTHIANS

Our second reading is from the First Letter to the Corinthians. St. Paul teaches that "the cup of blessing" is the blood of Christ and the "bread that we break" is participating in the body of Christ. Paul then emphasizes that since we eat the one bread of the Eucharist, we are one body in Christ.

SEQUENCE

The optional Sequence, *Lauda Sion*, was composed by St. Thomas Aquinas in 1254, specifically for the Corpus Christi Mass. It is lengthy but very beautiful. A shorter form is also available.

GOSPEL

Today's gospel is taken from John 6, the Eucharistic Discourse. The Lord Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms, "Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day."

Jesus recalls the manna that was provided in the desert. He says, "Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever." Manna sustained physical life, but only for a time. Jesus promises a living bread, his flesh, that will give eternal life.

If we read the entire chapter, we see that Jesus' listeners knew exactly what he said, and many of his disciples left him because of it. Jesus did not call them back or "walk it back," but rather turned to the Twelve and asked them, "Will you also go away?". Peter answered for the group and for all of us, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

FAITH, FOOD, FOREVER

John 6 packs a lot into 71 verses! It begins with Jesus feeding the multitudes with loaves and fishes, and then has to escape the crowds who want to make him a king.

Then Jesus comes to the disciples on the sea, walking on the water, in the midst of a windstorm.

This incident is followed by the Eucharistic Discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum, the ruins of which are still there today.

In this chapter, there is a great emphasis on believing in Jesus, eating his flesh as food, and the promise life eternal as a result. Jesus seems to connect the Eucharist to his ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit: "Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit who gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:62-63).

For a Eucharistic Revival, as well as for everything else, we need the grace of the Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit.