

Readings: [The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ | USCCB](#)

### **Consumed by the Body of Christ**

After easter we have three great feasts that help us understand the type of relationship that God wants to have with us. In Pentecost we realize God wants to remain close to us, so close God's spirit dwells within. In celebrating the Trinity we realize God is a communion of relationships, and we come to know God through relationship. And today we have the great solemnity of Corpus Christ, the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, which helps us understand how God wants to be in relationship with us.

So, since today we are celebrating the body of Christ, lets see how well versed you are in some of the basic teachings on the body of Christ. I will say a few statements, to each, you tell me if I am right or wrong.

1. The Eucharist symbolizes the body of Christ. Wrong. We believe the Eucharist is not a symbol, but the true presence of Christ.
2. The body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is contained in the body of Christ. Right. This is a statement that goes back to the council of Trent.
3. Jesus becomes present in the Eucharist by what we call consubstantiation. Wrong. Consubstantiation is what our neighbors across the street believe. Consubstantiation says that yes, Christ becomes present in the bread and wine, but alongside the bread and wine. It is both bread and wine, and body and blood of Christ simultaneously. We, on the other hand, understand it as transubstantiation, that the bread and wine stop being bread and wine all together, and although the

appearance is still bread and wine, they are completely transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ.

4. Where two or three are gathered, there is Jesus. Therefore, we believe that the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is made present only during our gathering at mass. Once mass ends, the hosts return to being ordinary bread, but we still hold respect to it in the tabernacle because it will become the presence of Christ again next time we gather. Wrong. We believe that once consecrated, the presence of Christ is there until the host itself disintegrates.
5. There are multiple ways in which the body of Christ is made present. Correct! When we talk about the body of Christ most of us usually think just of the Eucharist because it is so central to our faith, but there are three manifestations of the body of Christ, and it is important to distinguish between the three and understand their relationship with one another to really appreciate how God is present in the world.

The first manifestation of the body of Christ is Jesus' physical body which became incarnate, suffered, died, was buried, rose, from the dead, and has ascended to the Father. Before the incarnation, people had a very distant relationship with God, and that distant relationship led to many misconceptions about the divine... from there being many gods, to the gods being angry and vengeful etc. But in the incarnation, divinity and humanity are united, and Jesus reveals to us, through his own physical body, that God is with us. We enter relationship with God through baptisms which unites us to the resurrected physical body of Christ.

Then second manifestation of the body of Christ is the presence that Jesus left us in the Eucharist through bread, which is different than his physical body.

Sometimes people think of the Eucharist as the same as the physical body, and we can become a little scrupulous, as if we were receiving a piece of literal flesh like a toe or ear of Jesus. And while we do use language about the Eucharist that is very flesh like, we use it only to highlight the fact that yes, the totality of Christ's presence is in the elements of bread and wine, there is nothing lacking in the Eucharist. So why do we have the Eucharist? How does it work? In the Eucharist, Jesus becomes present by transforming, or consuming, the elements of wheat and wine into the divine presence. The divine presence makes this holy, meaning, it brings things into closer relationship with God. Therefore, when we consume the Eucharist, we are consuming the transformative presence of God, in in that way, we are also transformed into Christ. In consuming, we are being consumed, and becoming one, in relationship with God, a relationship we need throughout our lives that carries us towards the resurrection.

That is what makes the Eucharist so incredible, the reason I serve as a priest... the reason why we have the eucharist in the first place. Yes, we adore Christ's presence in the Eucharist, but only because of what this presence does. I receive the Eucharist with reverence not because it is bleeding all over the place, but because I understand what the Eucharist is doing in me.

And that leads us to the third presence, the ecclesial body of Christ, the Church. The reason we have the Eucharistic body of Christ is not for the sake of the Eucharist itself, it is for us, so that we might come to see Jesus in each other.

Case scenario: an elderly eucharistic minister or priest holding a ciborium filled with consecrated hosts falls and the hosts go flying all over the place. What should be your main concern? If you are more concerned over the Eucharist scattered all over the floor and particles all over than the well-being of the person

who fell, then we need to work on your understanding of the Body of Christ in all its three forms.

The Eucharist is there for us precisely so that we may be more concerned for each other, so that we may form a community of believers wanting each other to share in that divinity of Christ. St. Paul was constantly concerned about the members of his community. He often told them to love one another, to take care of one another. In fact, he places the Eucharist in the context of how well the members got along. He tells them if they are not at peace with a fellow church member, that they refrain from receive the eucharist until they reconciled, not because they were unworthy of the Eucharist (that's a whole other homily, about who is worthy or not to receive), but because reconciliation is what allows the effects of the Eucharist to make Christ present in the Church, and where two or three are gathered, there is Jesus. The purpose of the Ecclesial body of Christ is to unite all people under the reconciled body of Christ.

The Solemnity of the most precious body and blood of Christ helps us understand how the presence of Christ is given to the world in three distinct forms, and how all of these forms of Christ's body themselves are not the end, but the means of salvation. Remember, Jesus came not to serve but be served, to give his body up for you.

True or false. At mass, we consume the body of Christ? Trick question... In a way yes, it is in the form of bread precisely to be consumed... but we are being gathered by all three forms of Jesus's body... not so much to consume, but to be consumed.