

Today we celebrate the feast of "Corpus Christi" or the feast of the Body and Blood of Jesus. There are two feasts in the liturgical calendar that invite us to meditate on the mystery of the Eucharist: Holy Thursday and the Feast of the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus, that is, today.

The Eucharist is a **spiritual treasure that was present throughout the entire Christian world for more than fifteen centuries**. In every corner of Christianity, people of all languages worshiped the Blessed Sacrament with beautiful hymns, majestic processions, and elaborate devotions. Then with the dawn of Reformation period with the separation of Christians from the mother Church, the Eucharist was given a backstage to the Word of God in many new religious communities. They started doubting the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Many Christians around us today do not accept the truth of Jesus' words about His Body and Blood. For us as Catholics, however, along with Eastern Orthodox Christians, this teaching of Jesus is **central to the very nature of the Church**. Without the Body and Blood of Christ, the Church wouldn't be what it is. The **Eucharist makes the Church, and the Church makes the Eucharist**.

Little Johnny was in Sunday school, and his mother came to pick him. "Boy," exclaimed Johnny as he settled himself in the car, "that story of Moses and all those people crossing the Red Sea was something!" "Tell me all about it," said his mother. "Well, the Israelites got out of Egypt, but Pharaoh and his army chased after them. So, the Jews ran as fast as they could until they got to the Red Sea. The Egyptian Army was getting closer and closer. So, Moses got on his walkie-talkie and told the Israeli Air Force to bomb the Egyptians. While that was happening, the Israeli Navy built a pontoon bridge so the people could cross over. They made it!" The woman was shocked, and asked, "Is that the way they taught you the story?" "Well, no, not exactly," admitted Johnny, "but if I told you the way they told it to us, you'd never believe it, Mom." Little as he was, Johnny had imbibed the secular mentality of our age that makes no room for miracles and spiritual realities. *Natural faith, which is limited only to what we can observe and verify, hinders the believer from arriving at that supernatural faith without which we cannot experience the miraculous hand of God. Let us move from our natural faith to supernatural faith.*

The presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is central to our faith, let me begin our reflection with a very concrete structure in the Church: Normally, the tabernacle in which the Holy Eucharist is enshrined is the focal point of any Catholic Church, and the tabernacle lamp draws our attention to this. However, during the celebration of the Eucharist (the Holy Mass) there are two focal points in the Church: the lectern – where the Word of God is broken; and the altar – where the bread is broken. In many Catholic Churches today, this distinction is very clearly brought out in the manner of the celebration of the Eucharist: the Introductory Rite begins at the Chair of the presiding priest, the Liturgy of the Word is celebrated at the lectern, the Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated at the altar, and the concluding rite is again taken back to the Chair. Let us now focus on the altar. What is the altar? The altar is the table of sacrifice where a covenant is sealed.

The Liturgy of the Word today invites us to look at the Eucharist as a covenant. All the three readings highlight the symbol of blood being poured out as a sign of a covenant. A covenant was ratified by the blood of an animal cut into two parts and laid apart, and the contracting

parties would pass between the parts showing that the one who breaks the covenant would face the same fate.

In the first reading of today, from the book of Exodus, God renews this covenant with the people of Israel. On Mount Sinai before the giving of the Law the people of Israel pledge themselves to keep His covenant. After the giving of the Law Moses sprinkles “the blood of the covenant sacrifice” half upon the people and half upon the altar of the Lord, to signify the mystical union between Israel and God. The tablets on which the Law was inscribed then becomes the sign of the covenant. The people of Israel would keep those tablets within the tabernacle and honor it as the ark of the covenant.

Nonetheless, in the practice of the covenant, we know that the people were not able to be faithful to this covenant. We are not able to be faithful. Therefore, God had to bring about a new type of a covenant. That is what we see in the history of God-becoming-man. In this context, our 2nd reading of today from the Letter to the Hebrews becomes very powerful. In the New Testament – the New Covenant – God does not ask us to split animals into two halves as Moses did. But he uses his own body, he pours out his own blood as the sign of this covenant. By doing this he takes on himself the punishment – for the unfaithfulness of man and he renews that covenant.

Long, long ago, God called all the guardian angels for an executive meeting. Then He said to them, "I'm putting together a plan to save the human race. My Son is going to earth, to become one of them." "Wow, that's pretty impressive!" said one angel to God. "Wait, there's more. They'll call him 'Jesus'— and he will suffer and die — and rise from the dead! That's going to show everyone the true evil of sin, and show them there's a way out of sin, back to life!

*Then one skeptic angel said, "We think it won't work, unless the human beings are part of it, not just spectators. "See, a lot of folks will come long after Jesus' dies and rises again— and they need to be part of it, too!" You are right, said God. Have you noticed, how the baby humans want to touch everything? And everything goes into their mouths! They love to eat!" "So, I'm thinking food! Food could really help the human race get deeper into what Jesus is going to do for them." "I'm thinking of using bread and wine." But said another angel, "God, how can bread and wine save them?" "Well, it can't! Bread and wine are nothing if that's all they are!" "So, would it be, like, a symbol? Like a picture on the wall?" "No, a symbol can't save them, either! It has to be **really BE Jesus**, or else it's nothing! "What they need is to eat and drink the life, and love, the suffering and dying, and rising, of Jesus! they'll experience Him being part of them, and they'll become part of Jesus! "But, God, that sounds kind of unpleasant..." God says it is his Body and Blood that will save them! They need to understand that. But—so they won't be afraid, we will use bread and wine!*

"It will truly be Jesus—because only Jesus can save them; but it will still look and taste like bread and wine—so it will be pleasing and attractive. "This is how they will literally be united with Jesus!" "Wow, God! That's quite a plan!" Another angel spoke: "Isn't all that a lot for them to understand, all at once?" "You're right," God says. "That's why they won't do it just once. They'll need to receive Jesus over, and over, and over!" "Even every day?" "Yes, if they want to. Certainly, every Sunday; that's the 'maintenance plan': Mass every Sunday is how they'll come to understand what Jesus did for them. "Plus, Jesus will be present in their churches, in the Eucharist. They'll know how real he is! They'll be able to bring their friends, and say, 'See? Jesus is here! Jesus is real!"

Without Christ's sacrifice of His Body and Blood there would be no priesthood. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is central to the very existence of the Church. Likewise, it is central to our life as Catholic Christians. The [Eucharist and the Church are God's marvelous gifts to us](#). They are not of our making. God not only speaks his word to us. He enters into us. He takes possession of our hearts and minds and bodies. He becomes one with us. And he wants to make us one with him. The moment of communion in the Eucharist, when we eat the body of Christ and drink his blood, is the greatest moment of intimacy that can exist between God and us.

God Bless You.