

June 3, 2018

The Feast of Corpus Christi - the Body and Blood of Christ '18

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him, says the Lord.

*Holy Spirit doesn't just come into our souls when we invite Her,
Holy Spirit is our soul into whom we are invited*

Today is the feast of Body & Blood of Christ. Biblical scholar, John J. Pilch, offers this comment on the Last Supper: Jesus sent his disciples into Jerusalem to find a man carrying a jug of water. In Jerusalem, a man carrying a water jar would be very easy to spot. That was a woman's task. If a man did carry water, it was more likely a skin slung over the shoulder or under the arm, while women carried water in a jar balanced upon their heads. At the supper, one, usually a widow, served the men who ate first. Women, girls, and boys under the age of puberty ate separately later.

Jesuit Fr. John Foley says that the Roman historian, Pliny the Elder ('23-'79 AD), described Christians as cannibals. Many of Jesus' followers simply walked away when he said, "*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.*"

This feast of the Body and Blood of Christ originated in 1264. Before that, the focus was on the Eucharist as a Sacrificial Action, not the Real Presence. People in the Middle Ages felt unworthy to receive communion, and preferred simply to look at the Blessed Sacrament. This led to the practice of the elevation of bread and cup during mass and public displays, along with other devotions such as Benediction.

Eucharist as Church - Us

Sts. John and Paul speak of the body and blood of Christ as the church, so that the change that takes place during the consecration is not just the change that takes place in the bread and wine, it is also about the change that takes place in us. It is the community that is consecrated - we are transformed. When we receive communion, we can look around at each other and say, "*You are the body of Christ, you are the body of Christ, you are the body of Christ.*" When we receive Eucharist, we are receiving each other.

A story of not being fed with the Body and Blood of Christ

Franciscan Fr. Michael Crosby, OFM, tells this story: "*A well-dressed white woman was walking to church when she came upon an Asian woman putting a coat on her young daughter. She gave an impatient shrug, made a face and went on her way. On the church steps, an elderly black man, removing his coat, greeted her. She gave an impatient shrug, made a face and went on up the steps. At the top of the steps, a Hispanic man opened the door for her. She gave an impatient shrug, made a face, and went on into the church. At that point, a voice-overlay was heard to say, 'If you can't find God in them, it's not likely you'll find God in there.'*"

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Christ's Spirit is our soul into whom we are invited*

A story of needing to be fed with the Body and Blood of Christ

Jesuit Fr. Greg Boyle tells this story: "Some years ago, I got a phone call at my office about three. It's from this guy named Horacio in his early thirties who had just finished a four-year stretch in prison. He said, '*You know, I just got out of prison, and I have no clothes. My lady, she burned them all.*' So I said, '*OK, I'll pick you up at six o'clock.*'"

So I took him out to buy some clothes. At three o'clock in the morning, he call's me. He was sober. He says, '*You know how I've always seen you as my father, ever since I was a little kid?*' And I said, '*Yah.*' *Whew,*' he says, '*I thought so.*' Now he starts to cry. And he can barely speak, and he says, '*Then you will be my father, and I will be your son. Nothing will separate us, right?*' And I said, '*That's right.*' At that early morning call, Horacio did not discover that he had a father, he discovered he was a son worthy having. How do we understand how such a change could happen?

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A story of feeding each other with the Body and Blood of Christ

A young man shared his story with us here a year ago who has known terrible suffering in his life and is filled now with joy and love. He told us of an incident which happened in his youth in which his father, who was a policemen, was shot in the face by a young boy with mental problems whom he was trying to help. Joe's father was paralyzed and is unable to walk, eat or talk. One can only imagine what the horror of such a thing would do to anyone, especially a young boy.

For upwards of two decades, Joe carried an anger and hate that was meant to kill, including that boy as well as himself. He did everything one does when trying to run away from the pain - addictions and destructive behavior of every kind one can only imagine.

Some twenty years later he heard someone speaking of Jesus' love for us from his Cross, and something radically changed in his heart. He was moved from bitterness to forgiveness, from hate to love. Joe reunited with his wife and family and became friends with the young man who shot his father those terrible years before. Now they speak to each other every week, ending with how much they love each other. How do we understand how such a change could happen?

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Today is the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. It is about us, it is our Feast.

So, Happy Feast Day - Everyone!