

FROM FR. CHRIS ALIMAJI'S DESK

Reflections on Corpus Christi: The Body and Blood of Christ

Today we celebrate the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, the sacrifice of Bread and Wine. *Eucharistia* which means "Thanksgiving" makes the Mass a Thanksgiving feast in the Body and Blood of Christ. Every time we celebrate Mass, we re-enact the Last Supper and the death of Christ on the cross. Christ offered himself willingly to the Father for us all. Therefore, the Mass is a thanksgiving celebration "through him, with him, in him". It is called *Corpus Christi*: Latin for "The Body of Christ". In the Eucharist we commune with God and one another, hence it is called Holy Communion, (cf. John 6:56).

We believe that through the transubstantiation that takes place at Mass during the consecration, the bread and wine truly become the Body and Blood of Christ. When anyone receives either the sacred Body or the precious Blood, it is the Lord that is received in any of the sacred species. We receive the Eucharist gracefully, after duly preparing through the sacrament of Reconciliation to purify ourselves of known sins, thus reconciling with God and our neighbors. Confession is a necessary requirement that we should observe in conscience. The Eucharist is a meal of love, joy, and peace, and for growth in holiness, given to us at table-fellowship. Today we emphasize the Holy Eucharist as spiritual food for the spiritual nourishment of members of God's family. The Lord promised to raise on the last day all that eat his Body and drink his Blood (cf. John 6:54). By extension, the Holy Eucharist is tied to the Holy Mass, and the Ministerial Priesthood is at the service of the Holy Eucharist. Both were instituted at the same time on Holy Thursday.

Let us theologize a little on the events of Holy Thursday Passover Meal and the death of Christ on the Cross on Good Friday. Scripture calls the death of Christ an expiatory or propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, meaning atoning sacrifice, intended to reconcile or appease, for our sins. (cf. 1 John 2:2). Hence St. Paul wrote that with our blessing cup that we bless, and the bread that we break, we participate in the body and blood of Christ, (1 Cor. 10:16). Christ commanded us to celebrate this New Covenant in his Body and Blood, in remembrance of Him, (cf. Lk. 22:19-20). In the Scripture Readings, our forefathers in the faith were fed by God with manna in the desert, (cf. Deut. 8:3, 14-16). Let us understand that manna was prefiguring the nourishment we receive from the Eucharist. The Passover lambs slain in Egypt and the rock from which water flowed that quenched their thirst also prefigure Christ. In the Old Testament also, Moses sprinkled the altar and the people with the blood of bulls, saying: "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words of his." (Ex. 24:3-8). Their sacrifice was animal sacrifice. Moses was the priest, prophet, and king. The prophets foretold a New Covenant, which was fulfilled in the New Testament, in the Body and Blood of the Lord for the forgiveness of our sins, which cancels and replaces the Old Covenant in animal blood, (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-13; Heb.9:11-15; Ps. 116).

The Lord Jesus Christ at the Last Supper changed bread and wine into his Body and Blood (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:23-26; Lk. 22:19-20; Mt. 26:26-28 & Mk. 14:12-16, 22-26). In John's Gospel Christ refers to himself as the "living bread" that gives eternal life, (cf. John 6:51-58). Here the Lord feeds us with spiritual food, a foretaste of the feast in the kingdom of heaven. The Lord has spread his table before us and satisfies our hunger (cf. Ps. 23). This is our feast and our celebration. Following this feast is the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus feast this Friday for our devotion and adoration of the Most Holy Eucharist. The continuous presence of the Lord is with us in the form of the Blessed Sacrament for exposition and our eucharistic adoration. Make some effort to attend the Benediction, for it is right for you as a Christian. It is your benefit and your privilege.