

CORPUS CHRISTI C

When you take a look at our parish logo, you see a large host sitting in a manger. It signifies Jesus, present in the Eucharist, is the same person who came to earth as the baby in the manger. That picture of the Nativity of the Lord Jesus is as accurate a portrayal as any other of the nativity. Today, it is a very appropriate image to focus on as we celebrate Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of Christ.

“When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death until you come again.”

These are not words spoken in the Old Testament after the Priest of God Most High, Figure of Christ, Melchizedek, is first described as offering elements of bread and wine to God. Melchizedek appears only one time in the Old Testament, in a fleeting manner as King of Salem, a mysterious personage, later to be exploited by the Letter to the Hebrews and exegetes and the inclusion of his offerings in comparison to that of Abel and to Abraham, our Father in Faith, in the First Eucharistic Prayer.

Melchizedek not only offers the sacrifice to God, but also blesses Abraham. The offering becomes what it does. The sacrifice becomes blessing. Melchizedek's blessing leads Abraham to victory over four kings and establishes his future as first of the patriarchs and eventually one whose descendants would be as numerous as the stars.

Of all the priestly figures in the Old Testament, this one obscure figure comes to light in his sole appearance and offering of one sacrificial offering and blessing because he became what he did, he became a priest forever, a type pointing to the Eternal High Priest to come.

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What was not known by Melchizedek was what would happen at the Last Supper, at Calvary, and at the Eucharistic Table each and every Sunday in perpetuum until the Second Coming. The apostles of Jesus Christ and their successors, bishops and priests, would gather the faithful, take bread and wine, and offer it to Almighty God and it would become what it does. This sacrifice become blessing. The blessing it becomes is the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. We know that because Jesus said so. So, when we read today's epistle from Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, and do not hear an account of the Last Supper there, we do not need to wonder why. **THEY KNEW IT!** They already believed it.

Much like as at a Jewish Passover meal, the Father says, “When I came out of Egypt...” during the telling of the Exodus. Of course, none of the people alive today came out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus. But they are “**THE**” people who came out. “**I**” am one of them. They identify. In our case, in the case of the Corinthians, “**THEY**” knew it.

So, it is not “as if” we participate in the Last Supper. We are one of them, here, now, present and accounted for. And when Jesus Christ’s words are heard, it is Jesus Christ saying them. And we respond, as the Corinthians would have responded, “When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death until you come again.”

Peter, Paul and Mary are all Biblical names. Peter, Paul and Mary was also the name of a folk singing trio in the ‘60’s and ‘70’s. They had one hit song that asked the question, “How many times...” about a number of things. The answer was always, “The answer my friend is blowin’ in the wind, the answer is blowin’ in the wind.” I wish they could sit and hear today’s Gospel passage. How many times has Jesus looked out for those who were hungry, tired, and thirsting for his message? How much food does he need to feed the many? Remember how the Lord fed the Israelites in the desert with Manna? Remember how Elijah got his food from the widow and she still had enough to eat? See how Jesus feeds this crowd with just a few fish and pieces of bread? The answer is not blowin’ in the wind; it comes from being God-like.

See how Jesus feeds the world with his body and blood from one sacrifice on Calvary? What was offering on Holy Thursday when Jesus said, “This is my Body, This is my Blood” is now blessing, is now God, food for eternal life.”

The multiplication of the loaves is the one miracle that is recorded in all four Gospels. Why are there leftovers? As a child, I liked that question, and never really had the chance to ask it at the right time. There were no refrigerators; no take out boxes; the people were tired and not going anywhere. Now, I think I have a good idea. They had food from Jesus with them. Why would they let go of it? It was precious. How could it spoil?

Christian tradition has always seen a lesson in the insistence of the evangelists on this abundance and the care with which the remainders were gathered. The Eucharist is the bread reserved by Christ to feed the multitudes of all times. As it nourishes you and me, it has real affects. It strengthens us, it nourishes us, it prepares us for each and every Christian act we perform. Saint Ambrose puts it this way, “...this food increases either in the hands that distribute it or in the mouths that eat it, since in all this the testimony of our activity is invoked in order to strengthen our faith.”

This wonder that we celebrate today, that we will honor with solemn procession after (the 11:00) Mass, is Emmanuel, God with us. It is Jesus. It is exactly what Jesus taught us to pray for when he taught us to pray, “...Give us this day our daily bread...”

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As the People of God, let us cradle the Eucharist in the mangers of our hearts, in the tabernacles of our bodies, and in the center of our parish life, just as the Eucharist appears at the center of our parish logo.