

THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRIST – YEAR A

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor 10:16)

Many of us have experienced the pain of loss, caused by being separated from those we love. We think of the families whose loved ones, in generations past, left these shores to begin new lives, as migrants and as missionaries, possibly never to return. We think too of those we have loved, who have died and gone before us.

Being fully human as well as fully divine, Jesus understood our needs and our yearnings. Jesus had faced the death of Joseph, his beloved guardian. And as an only child, he knew how hard it would be for his Mother Mary, to journey on in life without seeing his face again. Jesus also knew how lost his friends would feel without him; those who had journeyed with him tirelessly throughout his active ministry. Furthermore, Jesus also knew how hard it would be for all of those who would come to believe in him through their testimony. The billions of disciples who would hold fast to the faith in the face of apathy, rejection, persecution and even martyrdom.

And so, on that first Holy Thursday evening, knowing that soon he would be going to the Father, Jesus having prayed for us, (John Ch.17,) gave us his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist. (CCC 1374) *“At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.”*<sup>(1)</sup> Jesus gave us the Eucharist was so that we would never be separated from him. Every time we attend Mass, we can receive him into our body and soul. Every time we enter a Catholic Church we know that he is there, ever attentive, beckoning to us, *“Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy*

*laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matt 11:28) The Eucharist is his gift to us as well as his abiding presence with us. How consoling this must have been for Mary and his disciples.*

Jesus also gave us the Eucharist so that we might be strengthened on our journey through life, *“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”* (John 6:35) In choosing to abide with us, in the form of consecrated bread and wine, Jesus indicated that his primary intention was not to be venerated, in silver and gold, *“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,”* (Mathew 20:28), but rather to be devoured as nourishment, *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”* (John 6:51) *“Thus from celebration to celebration, as they proclaim the Paschal mystery of Jesus ‘until he comes’, the pilgrim People of God advances, ‘following the narrow way of the cross’, toward the heavenly banquet, when all the elect will be seated at the table of the kingdom.”* <sup>(2)</sup>

To be Holy, (Perfect,) as God wants us to be Holy, (Matt 5:48,) we needed more than the manna God sent our ancestors in the desert. (Exodus Ch.16) Rather, we needed Divine nourishment. *“For Christians, there is no doubt that the greatest gift is Jesus, our salvation. In the Eucharist he has chosen to stay with us: he has made himself our ‘viaticum,’ that is, our spiritual nutrition for the journey through life. He sustains us in times of trial and difficulty; he renders us strong in hope and in our daily duties.”*<sup>(3)</sup> When we receive Jesus in Communion we don’t just take him into our bodies, we take him into our hearts and into our souls. He comes to make his home in us, *“To contemplate Christ involves being able to recognise him wherever he manifests himself, in his many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of his body and his blood. The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist; by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened.”*<sup>(4)</sup>

This food that Jesus gives is not for nourishment alone. It is also powerful medicine that helps to heal us of our failings, *“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the*

*righteous, but sinners.*" (Mark 2:17) By sharing in the Eucharist, we are healed because we share in the Divine life of Christ.

The Eucharist...

- Increases our intimate union with Christ. (Cf. CCC 1325, 1391)
- Reinforces our unity as the People of God, Christ's mystical body, (Cf. CCC 1396, 1398,) "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf." (1 Cor 10:17)
- Removes venial sins and increases our capacity for charity toward God and our neighbour. (Cf. CCC 1394)
- Strengthens us against committing grave sins. (Cf. CCC 1395)
- Helps us to resist temptation. (Cf. CCC 1393)

Let us never fail therefore to draw close to Jesus in the Eucharist, contemplating the words of St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *"This loving Shepherd of ours did not wish to separate himself from us by dying. Here I am, for you I stayed on earth in this Sacrament; here, whenever you wish, you will always find me, to help and comfort you with my presence; while you live on this earth, I will never leave you until the end of the world."*

- (1) Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.1323
- (2) Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.1344
- (3) John Paul II, Address, 15/01/2005
- (4) John Paul II, 2003, Ecclesia De Eucharistia, n.6