

## Body & Blood of Christ - Year A

[Deut. 8:2-3, 14-16; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; Jn. 6:51-59]

*Excerpts from Benedict XVI - Thursday, 23 June 2011*

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Brothers and sisters, today's feast is linked to Holy Thursday, Mass of the Last Supper. We relive the mystery of Christ who offers himself to us in the bread broken and wine poured out. The feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, known as Corpus Christi, is proposed for the adoration and meditation of God's people, reminding us that the Risen Christ walks among us and guides us toward the Kingdom of Heaven.

What Jesus gave to us in the Upper Room, today we express openly, because the love of Christ is not reserved for a few but is destined for all. The Eucharist is the transformation of the gifts of this earth - the bread and wine - whose aim is to transform our **lives** and in the transformation of the world. Everything starts, one might say, from the **heart** of Christ, who at the Last Supper on the eve of his passion, thanked and praised God and in doing so, with the power of his love, **transformed** the meaning of death which he was about to encounter.

The fact that the Sacrament of the Altar has taken on the name "Eucharist", "thanksgiving", expresses this: that the change in the substance of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is the fruit of the gift that Christ made of himself, a gift of a love stronger than death, divine love that brought him to rise from the dead. That is why the Eucharist is the food of eternal life, the Bread of life. From the **heart** of Christ, from his "Eucharistic Prayer" on the eve of his passion, flows the life that transforms reality in its cosmic, human and historical dimensions. The **heart** of Christ is immersed in love; because of this, he knows how to thank and praise God even in the face of betrayal and violence, and therefore changes things, people and the world.

This transformation is possible thanks to a communion stronger than division, the communion of God himself. The word "communion", which we use to designate the Eucharist, sums up the vertical and horizontal dimension of the gift of Christ. The expression "to receive communion" refers to the act of eating the Bread of the Eucharist. In fact, when we carry out this act, we enter into communion with the very life of Jesus, in the power of this life that is given **to us and for us**. **Through Jesus, to us**: a unique communion is transmitted in the Eucharist.

We have heard in the Second Reading: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the **blood** of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the **body** of Christ?" In his 2011 homily for Corpus Christi, Benedict XVI said: "While food is assimilated by the body and contributes to nourishing it, the Eucharist is a different bread: We **do not** assimilate it, but **it** assimilates **us** in **itself**, so that we become conformed to Jesus Christ, a member of his Body, one with him.

It is Christ who, in Eucharistic communion, changes us into him. The Eucharist unites us to Christ, opens ourselves to others making us members one of another: we are no longer divided, but **one** in him. Eucharistic communion unites me to the person next to me, regardless being in good terms or not. It is a profound sense of the Church social presence derived from the Eucharist. Those who recognize Jesus in the sacred Host, recognize him in their suffering brother or sister. Our special responsibility as Christians for building a supportive, just society comes from the gift of Christ's love. Christianity can and must ensure that this unity is not built without God. This would give way to confusion, individualism, the oppression of some against others.

The Gospel has always aimed at the unity of the human family, so that we may recognize each other as members of **one** and the **same** Body, the Body of Christ. At the Last Supper, what happened at that moment? When he said: This is my body which is given to you, this is my blood poured out for many, what happened? In this gesture Jesus was anticipating the event of Calvary. Out of love he accepted the whole passion, with its anguish and its violence, even to death on the cross. In accepting it in this manner he changed it into an act of giving. This is the transformation which the world needs most, to redeem it from within, to open it to the dimensions of the Kingdom of Heaven.

God always wants to bring about this renewal of the world on the same path followed by Christ, the path that is himself. There is nothing magic in Christianity. There are no short-cuts; everything passes through the patient and humble logic of the grain of wheat that broken open to give life, the logic of faith that moves mountains with the gentle power of God. For this reason, God wants to continue to renew humanity, history and the cosmos through this chain of transformations, of which the Eucharist is the sacrament. Through the consecrated bread and wine, in which his Body and Blood is truly present, Christ transforms **us**, conforming **us** to him.

He involves **us** in his redeeming work, enabling **us**, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live according to his same logic of self-giving, as grains of wheat united **to** him and **in** him. Let us walk the streets of the world, bearing **within us** the Body of the Lord, like the Virgin Mary in the mystery of the Visitation. With the humility of knowing that we **are** simply grains of wheat, let us preserve the firm conviction that the love of God, incarnate in Christ, is stronger than evil, violence and death.

We know that God prepares for **all people** new heavens and new earth where peace and justice reigns, and in faith we perceive the new world, that is our true home.