



Living the Gospel



The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

— June 6, 2010

Theme: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord; whoever eats this bread will live forever."

Gathering Prayer

All: Lord Jesus Christ, we worship you living among us in the sacrament of your body and blood. May we offer to our Father in heaven a solemn pledge of undivided love. May we offer our brothers and sisters a life poured out in loving service of that kingdom where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Luke 9:11-17

¹¹ The crowds, meanwhile, learned of this and followed him. He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured. ¹² As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, "Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here." ¹³ He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves." They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people." ¹⁴ Now the men there numbered about

five thousand. Then he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of (about) fifty." ¹⁵ They did so and made them all sit down. ¹⁶ Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. ¹⁷ They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

Gospel Notes

11-15 Jesus is sensitive to people's material and spiritual needs. Here we see him take the initiative to satisfy the hunger of the crowd of people who have been following him.

Through these conversations and the miracle he is going to work, Jesus also teaches his disciples to trust in him whenever they meet up with difficulties in their apostolic endeavors in the future: they should engage in them using whatever resources they have—even if they are plainly inadequate, as was the case of the five loaves and two fish. He will supply what is lacking. In the Christian life we must put what we have at the service of our Lord, even if we do not think it amounts to very much. He can make meager resources productive.

"We must, then, have faith and not be dispirited. We must not be stopped by any kind of human calculation. To overcome the obstacles we have to throw ourselves into the task so that the very effort we make will open up new paths" (J. Escriva, *Christ is passing by*, 160).

16 This miracle is a figure of the Holy Eucharist: Christ performed it shortly before promising that sacrament (cf Jn 6:1ff), and the Fathers have always so interpreted it.

In this miracle Jesus shows his supernatural power and his love for men-the same power and love as make it possible for Christ's one and only body to be present in the Eucharistic species to nourish the faithful down the centuries. In the words of the sequence composed by St Thomas Aquinas for the Mass of Corpus Christi: *Sumit unus, sumunt mille, quantum isti, tantum ille, nec sumptus consumitur*" (Be one or be a thousand fed, they eat alike that living bread which, still received, ne'er wastes away).

This gesture of our Lord-looking up to heaven-is recalled in the Roman canon of the Mass: "Et elevatis oculis in caelum, ad Te Deum Patrem suum omnipotentem" (and looking up to heaven, to you, his almighty Father). At this point in the Mass we are preparing to be present at a miracle greater than that of the multiplication of the loaves-the changing of bread into his own body, offered as food for all men.

17 Christ instruction to pick up the leftovers teaches us that material resources are gifts of God and should not be wasted: they should be used in a spirit of poverty. In this connexion Paul VI pointed out that after liberally feeding the crowds, the Lord told his disciples to gather up what was left over, lest anything should be lost. What an excellent lesson in thrift-in the finest and fullest meaning of the term-for our age, given as it is to wastefulness! It carries with it the condemnation of a whole concept of society wherein consumption tends to become an end to itself, with contempt for the needy, and to the detriment, ultimately, of those very people who believed themselves to be its beneficiaries, having become incapable of perceiving that man is called to a higher destiny" (Paul VI, *Address to participants at the World Food Conference*, 9 November 1974).

Gospel Reflection

There is perhaps no more heart-wrenching sight than the malnourished and starving. We receive pamphlets in the mail, see images on TV, bring nonperishable food staples to the church to offer during the presentation of the gifts. These sights demand a response from us. We know there is food in abundance. We know that often the world hunger problem is tied into politics. We know all these facts. And so when we celebrate this particular feast day and hear these particular readings, we are once more challenged to respond. Our own share in God's abundant gifts demands that those gifts demands that those gifts spill out for those in need.

But the plight of the needy extends beyond food, and our response must extend beyond providing food because this festival is about more than even the sublime gift of Jesus giving himself to us in the Eucharist. This festival is about handing over life.

Jesus' gospel command is clear: we are to feed others. We give to others not from the "deserted place" of our own hearts but from the "leftover fragments" of God's blessings (see first reading). God's abundant nourishment is most startling given in the handing over of Jesus' life (see second reading)-on the cross, in the bread and wine. As Jesus' followers we are to be God's abundant nourishment for others by our own self-gift of life. God's abundant giving continues in our own self-giving lives.

The Twelve apparently still haven't quite gotten this message of abundance and self-giving. They approach Jesus with the instruction to "dismiss the crowd"; this is clearly a practical response to a practical situation-a hungry, tired, large crowd. Jesus' response makes clear God's intention for us. "Give them some food yourselves." Perhaps the amazement of this gospel and

festival is that God so willingly chooses us human to make known divine superabundance and blessing.

The gospel moves from the practical, tangible level of feeding the hungry people to the mystery of God's abundance and excess; the gospel moves from our being in control to an invitation to surrender ourselves so that God provides in excess through us. On our own we will always lack; when we surrender ourselves to God and let God act in and through us, we will have all that we need in abundance.

This solemnity celebrates God's graciousness to us—a gift of super abundance. We are invited to participate in God's graciousness by passing on his abundance. Our lives, then, must witness to the intersection of need and generosity. Our self-gift makes present divine generosity.

Living the Paschal Mystery

The first reading relates the priest Melchizedek's bringing out gifts of bread and wine and blessing Abram. The last line of the reading records Abram's response: "Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything." Like Abram, we've been given many gifts, surely not least is the Eucharist. Our response, like Abram, must be to 'tithes' ourselves, to share those gifts with others. We proclaim the death of our Lord when we are the "body that is for [others]." Death leading to new life lies in giving of ourselves. If we dare to share in the sublime gift of Jesus' Body and Blood, then we must also dare to die to ourselves and share our abundance with others. Gift demands response. Sublime gifts demand ultimate response—dying to ourselves so that we might share eucharistic life with the world.

New and Old Testament links

First Reading — Genesis 14:18-20

¹⁸ Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words: ¹⁹ Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; ²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 110:1-4

¹ The LORD says to you, my lord: "Take your throne at my right and, while I make your enemies your footstool." ² The sceptre of your sovereign might the LORD will extend from Zion. The LORD says: "Rule over your enemies! ³ Yours is princely power from the day of your birth. In holy splendour before the daystar, like the dew I begot you." ⁴ The LORD has sworn and will not waver: "Like Melchizedek you are a priest forever."

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, ²⁴ and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

549 By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death, (Cf. *Jn* 6:5-15; *Lk* 19:8; *Mt* 11:5.) Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below, (Cf. *Lk* 12 13-14; *Jn* 18:36) but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage. (Cf. *Jn* 8:34-36)

Sharing and Discussion

1. Why do you think Jesus involved the disciples in the feeding of the multitude?
2. What message do the twelve baskets of left over broken pieces of bread and fish signify?
3. What can we do to welcome people to our parish life and encourage them to be nourished by Christ?

Closing Prayer

All: Gracious God, you give us all good things in abundance: hear our prayers that your gift of the Eucharist might transform us into being ever more perfect members of the Body of Christ. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Saturday 10am – 12nn at Church of The Holy Cross (room #03-06)

Contacts:

George Chee: georgejc@gmail.com - 97399216

Anthony Lim : am32lim@singnet.com.sg

Ellic Hiu : etshiu@gmail.com

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