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Hearing and Living the Sunday Readings

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ - Corpus Christi

Reading 1 Gn 14:18-20

In those days, Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand."

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Reading 2 1 Cor 11:23-26

Brothers and sisters:

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, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

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." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Gospel Lk 9:11b-17

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured. 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." He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves."

Reflection Questions

- Reading the passages slowly and reflectively, what word, phrase or idea strikes you in the readings? (circle or underline them)
- What do you think God is trying to say to you personally through these words?
- When the Church celebrates a special 'Feast' or 'Solemnity' it is frequently the result of controversy. The origin of this feast dates to the 12th Century responding to debate about the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. When was the first time you can remember debating and seeking to understand Jesus truly present with the gift of his body and blood in the Mass? How would you describe and share this eucharistic faith with a friend today?
- Melchizedek, King of Salem is a very mysterious figure without a genealogy. By his actions he is both King and Priest. And Salem is known as the future city of Jerusalem - the dwelling place of God the Most High for Israel. Abraham has just returned from overcoming 4 kings and rescuing Lot and all his possessions. A King was normally wary of such a visitor as Abraham. They would show welcome by tending to the wounded - hoping that their 'kingdom' would not be pillaged by the visiting army. Strikingly, Abraham who represents God's people, offers this Priest / King a tenth of all his possessions! Many writers comment Melchizedek is a sign of an altogether new and divine priesthood able to confer a special blessing from God. How do you understand the Priesthood today?

They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people."

Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty." They did so and made them all sit down. 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.

They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

The meaning of Words

We have a number of words we use to describe the 'body and blood' of Jesus. Today provides an opportunity to understand what we mean by the use of different words such as Eucharist, Holy Communion and Mass.

- Eucharist - comes from the Greek Eu - good. Charis - gift. When we use the word 'eucharist' we are actually saying 'good gift'. This is a greek word which we still use today. The body and blood of Jesus is indeed a 'good gift'!
- Holy Communion - comes from the Latin Comm - many. Union - one. Holiness is the quality of God. So, Holy Communion describes to us that when we receive the body and blood of Jesus many become one with the one who is Holy.
- Mass - comes from the Latin Missa. It was the last words spoken by the priest when Mass was said in Latin. It means 'go out'. We go out into the world to share the great gift of Jesus present in the Eucharist and to fulfill our priestly job of going out and bringing the World to Christ and Christ to the World.

• Paul's letter to the Corinthians is the earliest writing we have of the celebration of the Eucharist (15-20 years before the first gospel). Paul shares this 'tradition' (which means 'handing on') comes from Jesus himself. We are told to 'Do this'. For Jewish people, to do a ritual liturgical action in 'remembrance' was to actually enter and receive the event celebrated. Paul shares the Eucharist proclaims and makes present the cross and victory of Jesus. We receive God's forgiveness but also intimate communion. What does receiving 'holy communion' mean for you?

- King Herod has just asked a question 'who is this man of whom I hear such wonders?' (Luke 9,9). The Gospel of Luke shares this miracle story of the loaves. Old Testament background stories add texture to this passage where Elisha showed himself working by God's power to feed 100 people with a few loaves. God fed his hungry people in the journey in the desert through Moses. Jesus now feeds the hungry, sick, and poor of Israel. God's hospitality and Jesus' mission is shown. Jesus gets the 12 Apostles to serve the banquet. What might this teach us about the mission of the church in the world to the hungry? The Eucharist?
- The disciples attitude was one of inward focus and concern, 'turn them away' we don't have enough resources. Jesus' attitude was one of offering God's hospitality and welcome to all. Have you considered the question of poverty and world hunger - and the Church's response - ability. Check out www.stopthehunger.com for details of our global cry of the poor and hungry.
- The miracle of the loaves is not intended to be a description of the sacramental event of the Eucharist. This requires Jesus' institution event. But eucharistic language of taking, blessing, breaking and giving points to the Eucharist. As you receive Jesus' body and blood will your attitude be one of simply 'looking'? selfishly 'getting'? generously self offering?
- What is one action that you will do to 'livetheword' this week?