



June 22, 2014

Sunday of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ—Ordinary Time

Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

—1 Corinthians 10:17

Dear Friends;

Celebrating the liturgy pre-dates the writing of the New Testament. Scholars tell us that the shape of the New Testament was formed around the liturgical preaching and celebration of the Christian liturgy. The First Letter of St Paul to the Church in Corinth demonstrates this process. Paul had proclaimed the Gospel. Remember at this point there is yet no New Testament. Christ is present to them in the gathering of the community, the preaching and the celebration of the love-feast. Paul is clarifying the meaning of their gathering for the Corinthians. As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, let us examine what the liturgy teaches us about who we are and what is our relationship to Christ.

Our celebration of the Eucharist (the Mass) is divided into three parts—the *Introductory Rite* (we used to say the Gathering Rite), the *Liturgy of the Word* and the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*. Fr. Eugene Walsh used to express it this way: Gather, Listen and Respond.

GATHER. Jesus promised “*wherever two or three gather in my name there I will be...*” As soon as we leave home for Church on Sunday we are becoming part of a large procession. We should become conscious that we are assembling the Body of Christ. Through our faith and baptism we have become Christ’s risen body in the world. But it is necessary for us to see that body and nourish it. So each week we gather as one. We come to be nourished by Christ his word and one another. We become the Holy People of God.

The procession at the beginning of the liturgy is a culmination of the procession we began at home. The gathering rituals—Sign of the Cross, greeting, penitential act or the sprinkling of baptismal waters, the Glory, and opening prayer are meant to gather us in the Spirit as the one body of Christ. Now conscious of our assembly we are prepared to hear Christ speak to us.

LISTEN. When the Scriptures are proclaimed it is the Risen Christ who speaks using the voice of the lector, deacon or priest. Listening takes discipline. It also means that I must surrender control to another to pay attention to what is said. In the liturgy, we are called to HEAR Christ. (Unless you have a language or hearing problem) We should be focused on the speaker. The problem with reading along is we have not surrendered control and are not listening. The time to read the Scriptures is in preparation before the liturgy. During the liturgy we are to listen to Christ, the living Word, who is speaking through the reader. If we pay attention to another proclaiming the Word we will begin to hear new things. The role of the homily is to connect the Word to our time and place.

Like the synagogue in Jesus’ day, we have a three year cycle of readings. The cycle covers major portions of the Old and New Testaments. So if we have been paying attention we will have heard a great amount of the Bible. We listen to hear what Christ is calling us to be and to do. The Word always calls us to respond. If we do nothing we have not listened well. We begin our response by renewing our baptismal covenant. Then, as a priestly people, we offer prayer on behalf of each other and our world (listening to those needs we know that we are called to answer those prayers). This concludes our Liturgy of the Word.

RESPOND. Our response begins with preparing the gifts/offerings for our Thanksgiving (Eucharist). As part of the priesthood of the faithful we are called to offer “a sacrifice of praise.” We offer ourselves in the gifts of our time, talent, treasure and faith. *The collection (which supports the needs of the Church and its mission), the bread and wine symbolize us.* We join our gifts in imitation of Jesus who offered himself for the life of the world. Then in the name of the assembly the ordained priest, speaking in the name of all, offers the prayer of thanks to God. *In that prayer we petition the Holy Spirit to transform the bread, the wine AND US into the body and blood of Christ.* Then we affirm that prayer with a great AMEN! Then we prepare to receive the gift that God gives to us—Christ body and blood. We pray the Lord’s Prayer, for unity and peace. As we approach to receive these holy gifts we heed the advice of St Augustine, “Say amen to who you are, and become who you receive.”

It is also important to both eat and drink as Jesus commanded. The Eucharistic bread makes us one, but the cup symbolizes our commission to pour out our lives in mission to the Kingdom. (If for physical or psychological reasons you cannot drink please at least reverence the cup, do not just walk by as if it is nothing!) Once nourished as Christ’s body and blood we are sent to do his work of bringing peace to the world until once again we gather, listen and respond.

Peace,

Fr Ron

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