

Eucharist: The Bread of Life

Today the Church celebrates Corpus Christi. This one feast honors three realities: Christ's Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and His Real Presence with us under the forms of bread and wine.

At the Last Supper, Jesus gave us the Eucharist as both a meal and a sacrifice. As a Sacrament, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of the Risen Jesus. We call this change "Transubstantiation". The appearances remain, but the substance is now Christ Himself, given to nourish and strengthen us for life's journey.

As a Sacrifice, the Mass re-presents Christ's one sacrifice on Calvary. In an unbloody way, His death and resurrection become present on our altar. Through the priest, Jesus offers Himself to the Father, and with Him, He offers us. Pope St John Paul II called the Eucharist "the most precious possession the Church has". His daily hour of adoration shows us the reverence this gift deserves.

The Eucharist also makes us one. St John Chrysostom wrote: "What is the Bread? The Body of Christ. What do we become? The Body of Christ." Just as many grains form one loaf, and many grapes one cup, so we are united in Christ. Christ is the Head; we are His Body. Communion strengthens our unity and teaches us to give our time and talents for one another.

At Emmaus, two disciples walked away discouraged. Jesus walked with them, broke open Scripture, then at table He "took bread, blessed, broke it, and gave it to them". Their eyes opened. Strengthened by the Eucharist, they ran back to Jerusalem to proclaim: "The Lord is risen!"

That is our pattern too. At each Mass the word of God opens our eyes to the reality of Jesus in the Eucharist and we are fed with the body and blood of Jesus. The mass ends not with "dismissal" but "mission". Having received the Bread of Life, we are sent to share His love, service, and hope with all we meet this week. Let us give thanks for Jesus' sacrificial gift, and ask for grace to give ourselves back to Him.

May this feast renew in us a daily reverence for Christ in the Blessed Sacrament as we pray:

O Sacrament most Holy,
O Sacrament Divine,
All praise and all thanksgiving,
Be every moment thine.