

Sunday, June 18, 2017

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Responsorial: Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20

Gospel: John 6:51-58

Joyfully Receiving the Gift of Jesus' Body and Blood in the Eucharist

I am the living bread. (John 6:51)

Every time Mass is celebrated, a miracle is performed right before our eyes. The host is transformed into real flesh and the wine into real blood. While faith in what we do not see is essential, sometimes we need a little help. So here are some stories that might do just that.

One Sunday in 1263, a German priest, Peter of Prague, was celebrating Mass above the tomb of St. Christina in the town of Bolsena, Italy. When he raised the host, blood started to trickle over his hands and onto the altar. A year later, after investigation and authentication, the miracle was confirmed, and it moved Pope Urban IV to institute the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. The white, blood-stained linen corporal cloth can still be seen in the Orvieto Cathedral north of Rome.

Five hundred years earlier, while a priest was celebrating Mass in Lanciano, Italy, the host changed shape and began to look like real flesh, and the wine took on the attributes of real blood. After repeated and thorough investigations, the Church concluded that the transformed substances were indeed human flesh and human blood.

Later scientific studies have revealed that the flesh consists of muscular tissue from a human heart, and the blood has the same type—AB—as the blood on the Shroud of Turin. What's more, the blood contains proteins in the same normal proportions that are found in "fresh" human blood. Even though this miracle occurred 1300 years ago, you can still see the flesh in a monstrance and the blood in a glass chalice every day at the Sanctuary of the Eucharistic Miracle in Lanciano.

Today, as we celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi, let's thank Jesus for this great and wonderful gift—his Body and his Blood. Let's keep our eyes and our hearts open as we witness the Eucharistic miracle take place on the altar of our own churches!

"Thank you, Jesus, for the gift of your Body and Blood!"

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission. For more information on how to subscribe to their devotional magazine, go to www.wau.org).

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. In the first reading, Moses tells the people to “Remember how for forty years now the LORD, your God, has directed all your journeying in the desert.” We are also called to “remember” what the Lord has done for us and not to “forget” him. And yet it is so easy “forget” his great love for us when we are going through a difficult time.
 - How would you describe what Jesus has done for you?
 - How can you better use your memory of the Lord’s great love for you, and what he has done for you through his death and resurrection, when you are going through a difficult time?
2. Also in the first reading, we are told that “not by bread alone does one live, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”
 - What steps can you take to better incorporate Scripture reading into your day and then to “remember” them during the day?
3. The responsorial psalm begins with these words: “Glorify the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion.” It then goes on to describe all the things God has done for the people of Israel. He has “strengthened,” “blessed,” “granted peace,” and “proclaimed his word” to them. And “with the best of wheat” he filled them.
 - How do the wonderful things God did for the people of Israel apply to what he has done for us, his Church?
 - The word “eucharist” means thanksgiving. What are the specific things you are thankful to the Lord for that cause you to “Glorify the LORD” and “praise your God”?
4. In the second reading from the letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul says that “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? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”
 - What do these words mean to you, “we, though many, are one body,” especially when you consider our “separated brethren” in other denominations or divisions within our family and parish, and among friends, colleagues, and neighbors?
 - What impact do you think praying for those you are “separated” from you will have on future reconciliation?
 - Are you willing to create a list of people to pray for who are separated from you? If not, why not?
5. The Gospel reading begins with Jesus’ speaking to the Jewish crowds (and to us): “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. Jesus goes on to say that “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.”
 - What do the opening words of the Gospel reading mean to you?
 - What are the little things you can do during the day to make yourself more aware of the fact that Jesus’ presence “remains” in you and you in him?
6. The meditation begins with these words: “Every time Mass is celebrated, a miracle is performed right before our eyes. The host is transformed into real flesh and the wine into real blood. While faith in what we do not see is essential, sometimes we need a little help. So here are some stories that might do just that.” The meditation then goes on to describe two miraculous transformations that occurred while a priest was celebrating Mass above the tomb of St. Christina in the town of Bolsena, Italy, and while a priest was celebrating Mass in Lanciano, Italy. The meditation ends with these words: “Today, as we celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi, let’s thank Jesus for this great and wonderful gift—his Body and his Blood. Let’s keep our eyes and our hearts open as we witness the Eucharistic miracle take place on the altar of our own churches!”
 - What is your reaction to these two miracles described in the meditation?
 - As you celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi, what are some ways you can “thank Jesus for this great and wonderful gift—his Body and his Blood.”
 - What steps can you take before Mass to increase your own faith as you “witness the Eucharistic miracle take place on the altar”? What steps can you take after Mass?
7. Take some time now to thank the Lord for the great gift of the Eucharist, and pray that you would experience more deeply the gift you are receiving. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Thank you, Jesus, for the gift of your Body and Blood.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the **National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal** (<http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/>) and a member of the board of

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