

Sunday, June 14, 2020

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

Knowing and Experiencing the Love, Mercy, and Kindness of the Holy Trinity

My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. (John 6:55)

Have you ever had to go without food for an extended period of time? It wasn't a pleasant experience, was it? The longer we go without nourishment, the weaker we become. It feels as if our life is slowly draining from us—and in one sense, it is.

Jesus' words in today's Gospel make it clear that his Body and Blood are just as vital to us as food and drink are. Without the nourishment of the Eucharist, God's life in us can slowly start to drain away.

Here's an extreme example of how life-giving the Eucharist is. In his book *He Leadeth Me*, Fr. Walter Ciszek described the risks he took each day to offer Mass at the Siberian labor camp where he was imprisoned: "I would go to any length, suffer any inconvenience, run any risk to make the bread of life available to these men."

The men worked long hours in frigid temperatures. Yet at noon, Ciszek would celebrate Mass wherever he could say it undetected, whether in a storage shack or huddled in a building foundation. "Distractions caused by the fear of discovery . . . took nothing away from the effect that the tiny bit of bread and few drops of consecrated wine produced upon the soul," he wrote.

These prisoners were just as dependent on Jesus' Body and Blood to keep them alive as they were on the meager food they received from their captors. The Eucharist had become their true food and true drink.

Ciszek wrote that he was "occasionally overcome with emotion . . . as I thought of how [God] had found a way to follow and to feed these lost and straying sheep in this most desolate land." Today, may we too be filled with gratitude as we reflect on the generosity of a God who offers his life—and his very self—to us in the Eucharist.

"Jesus, thank you for the life you give me in your Body and Blood."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading opens with these words: *Moses said to the people: “Remember how for forty years now the Lord, your God, has directed all your journeying in the desert, so as to test you by affliction and find out whether or not it was your intention to keep his commandments. He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your fathers, in order to show you that not by bread alone does one live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord. Do not forget the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery.*
 - What message do you think Moses was trying to convey to the people with his words?
 - How does his words apply to us today, especially in remembering what Jesus has done for us?
 - Moses also says that *not by bread alone does one live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord*. What additional steps can you take to better incorporate Scripture reading into your day?
2. The responsorial psalm begins with these words: *Glorify the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For he has strengthened the bars of your gates; he has blessed your children within you. He has granted peace in your borders; with the best of wheat he fills you. He sends forth his command to the earth; swiftly runs his word! He has proclaimed his word to Jacob, his statutes and his ordinances to Israel.*
 - The psalm describes all the things God has done for the people of Israel. He has *strengthened, blessed, granted peace, proclaimed his word* to them, and *with the best of wheat* he filled them. How do the wonderful things that God did for the people of Israel apply to what he has done for us, his people and his Church?
 - The word “eucharist” means thanksgiving. In what ways does the Eucharist cause you to *Glorify the Lord and praise your God*? What else are you are thankful to the Lord for that also causes you to do the same?
3. In the second reading, 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?* The reading ends with these words: *Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*
 - What impact does these words of St. Paul have on your understanding of the Eucharist?
 - What do the ending words mean to you as a Catholic? What do they mean to you when “you consider our “separated brethren” in other denominations or divisions within our family and parish, and others?
 - What impact do you think praying for those who 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?
4. The Gospel reading opens 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 responds to the crowd’s objections by saying that Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.*
 - What do the words of the Gospel reading mean to you? Why do you think they were rejected by his people?
 - Why are they especially important to us as Catholics?
 - 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?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the Gospel reading and begins with these words: “Have you ever had to go without food for an extended period of time? It wasn’t a pleasant experience, was it? The longer we go without nourishment, the weaker we become. It feels as if our life is slowly draining from us—and in one sense, it is. Jesus’ words in today’s Gospel make it clear that his Body and Blood are just as vital to us as food and drink are.” It goes on to describe the risks Fr. Walter Ciszek took each day to offer Mass at the Siberian labor camp where he was imprisoned.”
 - What is your reaction to the opening words of the meditation and the story of Fr. Ciszek?
 - 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 and after Mass to increase your own faith in what you have received?

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.

“Jesus, thank you for the life you give me in your Body and Blood.”

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]