

The Feast of Corpus Christi:

The Body and Blood of Christ



I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. 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....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. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.

(John 6:48-58, New American Bible)

This solemn feast of Corpus Christi commemorates the institution of the Most Holy Eucharist which Jesus celebrated with his apostles on that first Maundy Thursday. Its institution in the Church in the 13th century as a separate feast to foster greater devotion to the Eucharist and the Blessed Sacrament was due largely to the advocacy of an Augustinian nun, Saint Juliana of Mont Cornillion in Belgium. From her youth Juliana had great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and longed for a special feast in its honor, as she felt the ritual for Maundy Thursday in Holy Week was overwhelmed by sadness in the remembrance of Jesus' Passion and death. Her desire increased when she had a vision of the Church under the appearance of a full moon having one dark spot, which signified the absence of such a solemnity. A local synod was held in 1246 and the first celebration was held the following year in her own diocese. Since Juliana died in 1258, before the feast was extended to the whole Church, her cause was left to her long-time friend Eve. **(Catholic Encyclopedia, internet.)**

But long before Julianna's effort in the 13th century, we are told of a great Eucharistic miracle that took place in the 8th century in Lanciano, Chieta, Italy. A Basilian monk suffering doubts in the Real Presence of Jesus in the consecrated Host, was startled when, before his very eyes, the Sacred Host visibly changed into Flesh, except in the center where the appearances of the sacramental species remained intact. Today this Host-Flesh is visible in a silver monstrance which dates back to 1713. There have been 4 investigations to date, the latest in 1970, by renowned laboratory research men in the medical field. Their conclusions are as follows:

- 1) The Blood is real blood and the Flesh real flesh.
- 2) The Flesh is composed of cardiac muscular tissue.
- 3) The Flesh and Blood belongs to the human species.
- 4) The blood groups of the Flesh and Blood are the same, coming from the same person, group AB, the same as in the Shroud of Turin.
- 5) Protein in the Blood is fractionated in the same percentage ratio as found in the serotherapeutic table of fresh and normal blood.
- 6) In the Blood are chloride, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, and sodium in a reduced amount, while calcium is in larger quantity.

These men conclude that the hypothesis of a forgery is without foundation and this 1200 year old miracle is thus scientifically upheld. (www.concernedcatholics.org)



Surely God wanted this feast established to celebrate His gift of Eucharistic Love in Jesus, for again, in 1263, a few years after Juliana's death, a German priest on pilgrimage to Rome stopped at Bolsena. The priest also suffered doubts of faith with respect to the Real Presence of Jesus in the consecrated Host. After speaking the words of consecration during Mass, blood began to seep from the consecrated Host and trickle over his hands onto the altar and the corporal. Confused, the priest went to see Pope Urban IV in nearby Orvieto, who ordered an immediate investigation. Thereafter the Host and linen cloth bearing the stains of blood were brought to Orvieto where the Pope, Cardinals and other dignitaries met the procession amidst much honor, and then placed the relics in the cathedral. The linen corporal bearing the spots of blood is still reverently enshrined and exhibited in the Cathedral of Orvieto today. (www.concernedcatholics.org)

Following this miracle, the Pope had St. Thomas Aquinas write an office honoring the Eucharist as the Body of Christ. Only one year after the miracle, in August of 1264, Pope Urban IV issued the bull *Transiturus*, ordering the Feast of Corpus Christi to extol the love of our Savior as expressed in the Eucharist, to be observed throughout the entire Church on the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday. But when Pope Urban died that year, the extension of the feast was again delayed

until Pope Clement V ordered its adoption at the General Council of Vienne in 1311. By 1325 the feast was adopted throughout Europe and England and spread from there. In the United States the solemnity is held on the Sunday after Trinity Sunday. Many customs, such as processions through the town with wreaths of flowers, grew up around the devotion. Over time some customs were discarded and eventually, the celebration was lost in the general devotional life of the Church. Today there is a resurgence of the devotion as many seek to restore more reverence and regard to the great gift and grace of the Eucharist and the Eucharistic Presence in our tabernacles, where we are called to our knees in adoration of our Saving Grace, our Bread of Life. ([catholicencyclopedia,internet](#))

Holy Mother Church uses typology in the interpretation of the Scriptures. As St. Augustine would say, the New Testament is hidden in the Old and the Old is fulfilled in the New. People and things in the Old Testament are understood as types of Jesus or of mysteries in the New. The Holy Eucharist as the Paschal Sacrifice and memorial banquet can be better understood in light of the sacrifices celebrated by the Chosen People. These sacrifices were regulated and detailed for God's people in the Book of Leviticus for the purpose of worshipping the one true God and to celebrate their Covenant, their fellowship, in which God would be their God and they would be His People. There were basically 5 sacrifices: burnt offering; cereal or grain offering; peace offering; sin offering; and guilt offering.

We can quickly see how these sacrificial rituals were fulfilled in the perfect Sacrifice and Eucharistic meal of Jesus. A burnt offering was the bloody sacrifice of an animal, burnt on the altar to atone for sin and to express the desire to devote one's life completely to God in holy living. The cereal offering was a gift of grain, flour and oil to acknowledge the Lordship of God and to express gratitude for his provisions. The peace offering was often associated with a vow to God and remembrance of the Covenant and celebrated fellowship, a communion with God and with others. The sin offering was the most common offering to atone for the unintentional sins, the human condition, of the individual or the nation. The guilt offering was a more serious atonement where restitution was required at 120% of the original value of the item of concern. All sacrifice, bloody or unbloody, involved some cost to the one offering it, and spoke to those essential attitudes of worship, atonement, peace, covenant and fellowship. Interestingly, the bread that was part of the grain offerings could not contain any leaven, for leaven is bacteria and signifies sin. Nor could the bread have honey in the mixture to sweeten it, for honey changes the *real taste* of the bread. Sometimes, where blood was let, blood would be sprinkled on the altar or even on the people. And with the burnt offering, it was fire from above that consumed the gift on the altar.

Just as these sacrificial rituals were regulated by God for deliverance from sin and the celebration of God's nuptials with His people, as seen in the Song of Songs, so the Eucharist was established by Christ as a re-presentation of His bloody death, the lamb slain for our sins on Calvary, made present on every altar in an unbloody manner, a wedding banquet, each time the words of consecration are spoken and the bread and wine become the *Real Presence* of Christ's Body and Blood, offered *for* and *to* us, to make us one Body with Him, the Bridegroom of His people. That Precious Blood of Jesus poured out on Calvary brought forth the Church which now pours out His Saving Grace all over us in her Sacramental life that celebrates our new covenant with the Lord. In Eucharist we are sealed in Christ's Blood, like the homes of the people during Passover, so death might not come to us. In that same blood, which is the life of the whole Body, we celebrate ourselves as Church, for we become Him Whom we eat, Christ's living body.

Just as the grain of old was unleavened to be pure and free of all bacteria, so our communion bread is unleavened, for it becomes Jesus, the sinless, All Holy, All Pure One of God, Whom we eat so we may become pure and holy, too. Just as the bread of old could have no honey to change its taste, so Jesus did not sweeten nor dilute His words, which some who followed Him thought were too hard: "Unless you eat My Body and drink My Blood you shall not have life within you." He is the Real Thing! Just as the fire came down from heaven to consume the burnt offering, so the fire of God's Spirit descends upon our altars to consume us in His Love and transform us in His grace and to lift our prayers and the gift of ourselves, as priest and victim, too, to our Father in heaven. Just as the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on priest and people, so we cover ourselves in that Most Precious Blood of Jesus to be a protection and pledge of our salvation. O how awesome is our God!

As in the days of old, a sin offering or purification had to take place before the sacrifice could be offered, so we begin every Eucharist with a penitential rite for the forgiveness of our unintentional sins, venial sins that result from our sinful human condition. The actual sacrifice is the Lord Himself, offered on our behalf, the only One Who could make adequate atonement for our sins, because His sacrifice is perfect. Unlike animal sacrifices which only signify atonement, His sacrifice makes perfect atonement and ends all need for further sacrifice. He is the Eternal High Priest Who is one with humanity and offers Himself for us as a sign of God's mercy, and He is the Victim who makes perfect atonement because He is one with God and can satisfy divine justice. As the people of old read from the Torah, so we devour the Word in our Scriptures in the first part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word, so that we might put on the mind and heart of Christ. As the people of old offered their grain and peace offerings, so we bring our bread

and wine, our monetary gifts, as symbols of ourselves and our labor and pledge our service to our King. We give Him thanks as is His due and ask Him to continue to provide our daily bread like He provided manna in the desert to His people. The word Eucharist means “thanksgiving.” Can we ever thank Him enough? Think of it! Our God is so gracious that He has given us His own Son so we would have a suitable gift to offer back to Him to say “thanks.” And He fixed that moment of Jesus’ saving death on the cross in an eternal presence before His Face as an endless prayer on our behalf. Every moment is a “mercy hour,” for at every moment of every day the Eucharistic liturgy is being celebrated on some altar some place in the world! Jesus is our peace offering to the Father, for He is our only true peace that comes with communion with Him in the Trinity of Love. As we pray the meal prayer Jesus taught us, we express our trust in our Father to provide for our daily needs and to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Forgiveness is the way to peace, as Jesus reminds us when He says, “If you are about to offer your gift at the altar and remember your brother has something against you, go first to be reconciled, then come back and offer your gift.” He is all about peace, which must come from within, and it must begin with “me!”

Baptism, the first sacrament we receive, which is necessary to receive the others, plunges us into Christ’s Paschal Mystery and makes us truly God’s new chosen people. The Eucharist, however, because it is the very Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Himself, made present on our altars in the words of consecration, is the greatest sacrament of all. Unlike the food we eat which becomes part of us, when we eat this Bread we become part of Jesus! This meal is a remembrance of the Passover Sacrifice that freed God’s people from slavery and led them toward the Promised Land. We recall this past Passover event so we might enter more fully into its Mystery in the present! Jesus is our Life, our Truth and our way to “pass over” from our sinful lives into His promised land of eternal glory. O how great is this mystery of transubstantiation! This memorial meal! This perfect sacrifice! The Eucharist is truly our greatest prayer, for it is the perfect intercessory prayer of Jesus, our only Mediator before the throne of the Father. He is the first “Laudem Gloriam”, praise of glory, an endless Alleluia to Abba, our endless song of thanksgiving to the glory of God’s holy name. He is our salvation and our blessing cup! He is the wine of our joy in the valley of our tears! He is a taste of heaven that keeps us hungering for more! He is the desire of the ages that burns with the Eternal Flame of His Love in our hearts!

Imagine, there is no prayer we could pray of our own, no sacrifice we could offer, no petition we could groan from the depths of our hearts, that could be suitable worship and praise, petition or thanksgiving, to come before the Face of

the Eternal Lover and Creator of all, or be as pleasing to the Father as the gift and prayer of the Beloved Son. Quite simply, God so loved us that He gave us His own Son, not only to atone for our sins, but to be our most precious gift to give back to Him as a constant reminder of our inheritance with Him. When God sent Jesus into our world, He gave us His Heart, for Jesus is the Heart of the Trinity, but when He willed Jesus should die in our place for our sins, He literally broke open His Heart and poured it out, first on Calvary, then on our altars every moment of every day. That one same sacrifice is like smoke rising to the throne of heaven as a hymn of praise at every moment of the day, on an altar somewhere.

Can we ever exhaust our understanding of this gift of the Eucharist for which God has prepared us over hundreds of years so we might begin to comprehend a bit of His unfathomable Love? We become His ark of this new covenant, for we carry in our flesh the Real Presence of the Sacred Humanity and feed Him to our starving, dying world! No wonder Holy Mother Church proclaims the Eucharist is the source, the center and the culmination of the Christian life! Nowhere else can we encounter our God with such intimacy and passion and power! How many saints suggested that if we could really understand Who it is we receive, we would crawl down that aisle to receive Him, or we would beg His holy Mother to lend us her all pure Heart so we might receive Him with her grace.

Let us listen to Our Lady's words to Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, visionary of the message of **Our Lady of America®**, on this Holy Sacrifice.

Beloved daughter, to many the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass no longer has meaning. These have lost that spiritual sensitivity of reaching out and touching the wounded hand of my Son. In a special way, during the Holy Sacrifice Jesus comes in close contact with those who meet Him in a profound act of faith in a deep sense of His Divine and human presence. It is a great loss when one loses the spiritual sight of the Son that the Father sent to guide us into the Eternal Vision.

(Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, *Our Lady of America*©, Fostoria, Ohio, pg. 40)

Now let us ponder, again and again, the wondrous words Our Lord Himself spoke to Sister Mildred in this message. May they be a blessing to us every moment of the day!

On Holy Thursday Jesus came, holding on His hands the Host and the Chalice, saying: "I am the Host of every communion. I am Life to all who partake of Me. They who do not eat Me will die, for no one can live who does not partake of Me, for I am Eternal Life.

Come, beloved souls, poor sinners so dear to the Heart of your Host. Come receive Me that you may live and enjoy everlasting happiness in the Kingdom of My Father Who is your Father also. This I have obtained for you through My Body and Blood sacrificed for you on Calvary and become your Food and Drink in the Holy Mass offered constantly for you. Do not disappoint My hopes for I have waited long, oh so long for you.

(Letter to Father Paul F. Leibold from Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, 1958. Father Leibold became Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati, Ohio April 10, 1958.)

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The Golden Arrow

May the most holy, most sacred, most adorable,
most mysterious and unutterable Name of God be
always praised, blessed, loved, adored and glorified,
in heaven, on earth and under the earth,
by all the creatures of God, and by the Sacred Heart
of our Lord Jesus Christ
in the most Holy Sacrament of the altar.

(This prayer was revealed by Our Lord to a Carmelite Nun of Tours in 1843 as reparation for blasphemy. "This Golden Arrow will wound My Heart delightfully," He said, "and heal the wounds inflicted by blasphemy.")

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