

BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST YEAR C;

(Gen 14:18-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Lk 9:11-17)

Today we celebrate the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. The most precious treasure that Christ left for his church, for us, is the gift of himself in the Mass. We celebrate our vocation to be the body of Christ, his visible, tangible presence in the world. This implies that He is the unifying principle and unique source of life. In the Mass, meeting together as God's family and sharing the one meal, we show and experience our radical and intimate union with Christ in a unique way. Homily

At one time or another, all of us have been ignored or passed over. His can be very painful. We feel that our work is not recognized, and we ourselves are treated as if we didn't really count. But something worse can happen to us that is more than just being ignored. We could be forgotten. This is even more painful. It is to be treated not just as of little account, but of no account at all. It is as if we didn't exist. We all pine to be remembered. It is said that people do not fear death so much as the possibility of being forgotten. Jesus too wanted to be remembered. The night before he died, as he sat at table with his friends he took bread and said 'this is my body given up for you. He took the cup and said,' this is my blood ...do this in memory of me. Of course Jesus was not thinking of his own need to be remembered, he was thinking of his disciples. They too needed to remember him. In his love for them, he left them a special way of remembering him, that is, the Eucharist. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist we recall the wonderful things he said and did.

In the first reading just heard that Abraham paid the tenth part, an act which is known today as tithe, but he went away richer with the joy of having heard blessings confirmed on him [Lk 1:39]. Abraham was so satisfied with this blessing from Melchizedek that he refused to take anything from the inhabitants of Canaan. Melchizedek was the king of Salem, the future Jerusalem, the Holy City. He brought bread and wine. This is symbolic. In Israel, Kings were not priests, hence do not offer bread and wine. However, in Psalm 110 and Hebrew 5:6, we see Melchizedek prefiguring Christ. Hence Christ is mentioned in veiled form as the priest and king who consecrates bread and wine.

The theme of the multiplication of loaves as reflected in today's Gospel is mentioned also in Mathew 15:32, Mk 8:1 and John 6. They represent the announcement of the Eucharist which is the high point of all liturgical worship. This miracle best shows

Jesus' absolute power over nature. Also one might understand and appreciate it better if one reasons that in Jesus' time, just as today, there were many poor people, too numerous for a limited fertile territory that they had. Many people were living from hand to mouth. The Roman sovereigns, imperialists and occupants claimed a good portion of the limited resource of the people. Rulers like Herod imposed heavy taxes. Many people had no security regarding employment. Jesus shared in the situation. He felt responsible for all his brothers and sisters who became his guests. He had to feed them. In those days perhaps more than today, people would have shared their last resources with those who are poorer, confident that God would reward them. Jesus was no less considerate. The scripture tells us that from the mouth of God comes bread and also the word that we need [Deut 8:3]. The crowd seated for meal is the image of the reign of God when Jesus will unite all humanity in the fraternal banquet of God.

Many of the prayers made by the people of the OT are centered on reminding God, in case his memory slips of the promises he made to save them. When the chosen people face new trials, their insurance against disaster is the promise of God to see them through their time of pain. They held fast to that word of promise. Each new experience of want and suffering serves to keep alive the memory of God's promises. Their prayers of intercession were made to jolt God's memory, to play back his promises, to hold him to his word. But what happens when the people came into plenty? Do they remain faithful to their promises to God in the midst of prosperity? It is often the case that the more we get richer and comfortable, our memories and appreciation of the Lord's goodness gets poorer