

Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

“Remember how for forty years the Lord has directed all your journeying in the desert...”. (Dt 8:2)

June 14, 2020

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (Yr.A)

Dt. 8:2-16; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; Jn 6:51-58

Today, we celebrate the solemn feast of Corpus Christi. This Solemnity is three feasts in one: *the feast of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the feast of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and the feast of the Real Presence of Jesus in this Sacrament.*

Corpus Christi is a doctrinal feast established for three purposes:

- 1) to give God collective thanks for Christ’s abiding presence with us in the Eucharist and to honor Him there;
- 2) to instruct the people in the Mystery, Faith and devotion surrounding the Eucharist, and
- 3) to teach us to appreciate and make use of the great gift of the Holy Eucharist, both as a Sacrament and as a sacrifice.

With many people still unable to physically receive Communion, due to the onslaught of this Pandemic COVID-19, and its concomitant negative effects on our lives, we should seek alternative ways to honor this day while looking forward to receiving the sacrament in the very near future.

In Deuteronomy, Moses speaks to his community of God’s saving acts that liberated them from slavery. He reminds the Israelites that God has provided nourishment and care for them along their journey, sending Manna- the bread from heaven - quail and water to sustain them, and to highlight the sweetness of God’s gift (Ex 16:1-17:7).

So, he says: “Remember how for forty years the Lord has directed all your journeying in the desert so as to test you by afflictions to see whether or not you could keep his commandments...”

God’s journey with his people in the desert involved difficulties but also God’s providence and care. *“You were hungry, and I fed you with manna – a food*

unknown to you". Providing food is a basic expression of care for your children. It creates a bond. And yet the Israelites soon grew tired of this 'manna'. It became taken for granted. Indeed, this episode we are recounting, reminds us of the humbling power of the Holy Eucharist (Mass), which we gather, albeit virtually, to celebrate today.

Hence, in today's Gospel, we hear John's language of sacramentality with Jesus identifying his body and blood as heavenly gifts that are true food leading to eternal life. *"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; and will live forever"*.

Let's note here, that it is no accident that the words *"flesh and blood"* are repeated 10 times in this text. However, this declaration of Jesus, sparked off a huge controversy and a revolt! *"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"*

The end-result is abandonment by most of Jesus' followers. In the same vein, in these very dark moments, such questions pop up in our minds: *Is Jesus a mere 'man' or the Divine Son of God? What does the Mass bring into the life of the world and the Church and offer personally to me? How could we reawaken a deeper sense of appreciation for God feeding us with the Word and the Body and Blood of Jesus at mass? Is it 'normal' or 'special'? How? What change and purification may be necessary in my life?*

Truly, "Repetition leads to familiarity. And familiarity also breeds contempt"!!

During this period of social distancing, most people have been physically unable to receive the body and blood of Christ. How, then, can we celebrate this feast that is so tangible in nature?

Like the Israelites, though we might also need to vent our angst and frustration as we continue along this desert journey, in order to sustain us, we might need to be reminded of the blessings we have already received from God, while praying and expressing our desire to be physically reunited with God and one another pretty soon.

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