

- Today we celebrate the solemnity of *Corpus Christi*--the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ —the Eucharist...God's unmatched gift to His Church and to mankind, which the Church calls the "sacrament of sacraments" and the source and summit of the Christian life.
- In the words of the Second Vatican Council: *"The other sacraments, as well as with every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are tied together with the Eucharist and are directed toward it. The Most Blessed Eucharist contains the entire spiritual good of the Church, that is, Christ himself...giving life to men who are thus invited and encouraged to offer themselves, their labors and all created things, together with him. In this light, the Eucharist shows itself as the source and the apex of the whole work of preaching the Gospel."* (Prebyterorum Ordinis, 5)
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- The Eucharist is the primary reason we come together weekly in Mass. We come to hear the word of God, of course...but the pinnacle of our celebration is the sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ...in obedience to Jesus' command: *"Do this in memory of me"*...this greatest source of grace which He instituted on the eve of His crucifixion.
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- Because Christ's Body and Blood remain under the form of bread and wine, even some Catholics do not realize what it really is.
- Nothing makes a priest cringe more than a Catholic saying: "I went up to get the 'bread' or 'the wine.'"
- We consume no bread or wine in Mass. After the words of consecration, the bread and the wine no longer exist; only the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ...and our worthy partaking of them is truly a communion with God, for Jesus is God.
- On that Last Supper evening so long ago, Jesus (God) Himself left us with His Body and Blood to remain with us until the Parousia: *"This is my Body; this is my Blood."*

- And He ordained His apostles to carry on this sacrifice until He comes again with those words: *“Do this in remembrance of me.”*
- If we had strength enough for salvation, He would not have left to us this immense and never-ending fountain of grace to strengthen us throughout the ages.
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- St. Thomas Aquinas wrote: *“No other sacrament has greater healing power; through it sins are purged, virtues are increased, and the soul is enriched with an abundance of every spiritual gift.”*
- So this “sacrament of sacraments” is that from which all other sacraments receive their holiness...because it is the Body and Blood of Christ Himself...is not simply a “symbol” in which Jesus is present in some vague “special way”, or just a symbol of fellowship, but a real “communing” with God.
- For that reason the Church reminds us to only receive the Eucharist in a state of grace...free from any unconfessed mortal sin.
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- I had the question the other day as to whether we can receive the Eucharist if we only have venial sin. The Church teaches “Yes”... for the Eucharist wipes away venial (but not mortal) sin.
- But I tell people...if in doubt, confess...and don’t deny yourself the grace of confessing even venial sins.
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- Why do we believe all this? After all, the host still looks like bread; what’s in the chalice still looks like wine.
- But simply because we are blind to the light doesn’t mean the light doesn’t exist.
- We believe because of Jesus’—God’s—word: *“...Jesus took bread...and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; **this is my body.**” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for **this is my blood** of the*

*covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matt 26:26-28)*

- This Last Supper event completes what Jesus taught in chapter 6 of the Gospel of John when He says:
- *“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.” (Joh 6:51 NAB)*
- His disciples said after this: *“How can this man give us (his) flesh to eat?” (Joh 6:52 NAB)*
- But Jesus simply replies: *“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...the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.” (Joh 6:53-57 NAB)*
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- Very hard to understand, yes, and we can understand why so many of His disciples abandoned Him at this point...because they rely on their own experience and wisdom.
- The Gospel says: *“...many of his disciples who were listening said, ‘This saying is hard; who can accept it?’ ‘After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him.” (John 6:66).*
- All abandon Him...except the apostles...because they made that true leap of faith in Jesus...the same leap of faith WE are called to make.
- *“Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?”*
- Peter answered Him: *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” (Joh 6:67-69)”*
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- What did the early Church believe? We need look no further than St. Paul...part of which was in our second reading:

- In 1 Cor 10: *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?”* (1Corinthians 10:16).
- And in 1 Cor 11: *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord...anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.* (1Corinthians 11:23-29)
- NOT the language to use for simply a symbol or for a vague “sign of fellowship”.
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- By Jesus’ own testimony the Eucharist is truly His Body and the Blood—it simply remains under the *appearance* of simple bread and wine...yet is a treasure far beyond all earthly wealth...truly our treasure which also awaits us in Heaven.
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- The Eucharist is THE memorial of the sacrifice of Christ—it is both the perfect worship of God, and the supreme gift of grace to Man.
- That is why it is one of the first sacraments received after baptism; that is why it is to be the last sacrament received before death.
- So when you receive the Eucharist, let your “Amen” truly mean: “Yes...I believe!”
- Because it is through it...through HIM...that we receive everlasting life.

**Reading 1**

[Dt 8:2-3, 14b-16a](#)

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;  
who guided you through the vast and terrible desert  
with its saraph serpents and scorpions,  
its parched and waterless ground;  
who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock  
and fed you in the desert with manna,  
a food unknown to your fathers."

[147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20](#)

**Responsorial Psalm**

**R. (12) Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

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.

**R. Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

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!

**R. Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

He has proclaimed his word to Jacob,  
his statutes and his ordinances to Israel.  
He has not done thus for any other nation;  
his ordinances he has not made known to them. Alleluia.

**R. Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

[1 Cor 10:16-17](#)

**Reading II**

Brothers and sisters:

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.

[Jn 6:51-58](#)

**Gospel**

Jesus said to the Jewish crowds:

"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."

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying,

"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Jesus said to them,

"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.

Just as the living Father sent me  
and I have life because of the Father,  
so also the one who feeds on me

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will have life because of me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven.

Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died,  
whoever eats this bread will live forever."