

Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Two Sundays ago we celebrated that the Father (and the Son) sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost - and forever through time - to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit lives with us and within us, if we are willing, to lead the Church into all truth - and each believer - and to gradually build us up into the full likeness of Christ. At the same time God has given us freedom, we can be open to the activity of the Spirit and can also quench it and do our own thing. Christianity is not about making little but free men and women who live their lives in Christ – and Christ in them.

Last Sunday, Most Holy Trinity, we celebrated that in receiving the Holy Spirit we receive also receive the Father and the Son, for the three Persons are inseparable within the One God.

Now, today, Corpus Christi, we complete this series of three Sunday celebrations - by giving special thanks for the covenant meal by which our union with God can be renewed and strengthened – Holy Communion - receiving the True Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, in the consecrated Bread and Wine. By this spiritual food we are incorporated into Jesus Christ. As Catholics we believe that the Sacrament creates a spiritual union with the Pope, our archbishop, and with each other.

In today's Old Testament reading from the book of Exodus, we hear how the Covenant of God with His chosen people Israel was sealed at Mt. Sinai with the shedding of the blood of young bulls. In Jesus Christ, a new and more perfect Covenant was sealed for all time and offered to all peoples through the shed Blood of Jesus Christ. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews asserts how much more powerful for us is this Precious Blood which cleanses our consciences and sets us free from “dead works” (sins) to worship the Living God. Jesus is the perfect mediator of this new Covenant since He is both Divine and Human. He is able to be the perfect bridge linking man to God and God to man. Holy Communion is not meant to be received in isolation from a Christian life that includes prayer and ongoing learning of our Faith, of service to one's family, parish family, and neighbors.

We are created for communion; communion with God and with each other. In the end it is the strongest and deepest need in us human beings, though we sometimes try to ignore it. Several years ago researchers sought to discover why some newborn babies failed to thrive in institutional settings. The decisive factor proved to be human touch, connection. Babies could receive the very same nutrition, diaper changes etc. But being held and interacted with, proved to be the decisive factor in their well-being. Studies of sports teams have found an association between winning and the amount that team members hug each other. But in America today we have a growing epidemic of loneliness and the absence of regular human contact. Many people go for months without a friendly hug. We are literally starving for communion.

The truth is we are made in the likeness of God who is Communion. The human need for communion, connection, relatedness surpasses our need for material things, for entertainment, for comfort and convenience, even for physical survival. Individual human beings demonstrate the preeminence of communion every day. Whether in sacrificing their time and energy, or even risking their lives on behalf of another (or for a sacred principle), people willing lay down their own convenience and safety, expressing the supreme value of communion.

Communion with God opens us to the horizon of eternity, since God is eternal. He existed before creation and will after, the Alpha and the Omega. So our Communion in Christ creates a link for us to eternity, what St. Paul calls an "eternal inheritance". Let us give great thanks today for this gift of communion with God and with each other that was accomplished on the Cross and is made new in the Sacrament at each celebration!