

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ “C”

These are very rich scriptures that are given to us today. I could choose to give a homily on an almost endless list of topics. I could speak about the ordained priesthood and how it is conformed to the priesthood of Christ. I could speak about the significance of bread and wine that is offered both by Melchizedek and by us here today. I could speak to the importance of the Eucharist in our lives, and to the well-being of all creation. And who knows, I my touch on some of these points. But I want to start by talking about the fable of the race between the tortoise and the hare.

I am willing to bet that most of you, at the mention of this tale could tell me the ending. You might even be able to tell me the moral of the story. But could you tell me the hare's name? How about the specific reasons the race ended the way it did?

Sometimes, the problem of hearing a familiar story is that the mind glosses over or through the finer details of the story, sifting out the most familiar aspects, and rushing to the conclusion.

Familiarity with the story is as much a problem for me as it might be for you.

Oh, yeah, Jesus feeds five thousand people with a few loves of bread and fish. Oh and there were twelve baskets left over.

In our second reading, while we might not remember that it was St. Paul that wrote this letter, or who it is addressed to, the text is familiar to us as well.

And it should be. We are Catholic. Every week we gather here to celebrate what Paul reminds us of.

**That the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over,
took bread, and, after he had given thanks,
broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."**

**In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.**

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

We hear words similar to these at the consecration. They are so familiar to us, sometimes we may not even hear them, and, really don't we sometimes miss the significance of what is said here at this altar, what the reality is that actually takes place here, that the bread and wine, fruit of the vine and work of human hands, therefore incorporating ourselves, all that we are and what we do into these gifts, become the body, blood, soul and divinity of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This over familiarity is one of the reasons the Church gives us a special day to really pay attention, to really try and grasp a little more of what it is all about when we gather here at this alter.

Truthfully, I could spend every waking hour of every one of my remaining days reading, praying and contemplating this great mystery of the Eucharist, and would hardly have begun to understand it.

It is, however, my role this evening, as your Deacon to try to break open these scriptures given to us tonight.

Saint Paul tells us, at the end of the second reading, something about the “why” of what we do here. It’s one of the details some of us ay have glossed over. He says:

**For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.**

At each and every Mass, your Holy Priest offers, in an un-bloody manner the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary. In making this offering, he does not do something that merely represents this sacrifice, but he RE PRESENTS to the Father, in the unity and power of the Holy Spirit, the very same sacrifice on the cross of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who by this very same both one and continual sacrifice, takes away the sins of the world.

Another part of the “why” of our celebration is addressed in today’s Gospel. Again, there is something significant that is easily missed because we are so familiar with this Gospel passage. Let me ask, what was Jesus doing before he fed them?

He was proclaiming the Kingdom of God, and he was healing the sick. And when the apostles came to him, he was moved, not ou of pity, but out of compassion and love to meet their immediate need, hunger.

It is an extravagant miracle, in that “all had their fill”.

Today we celebrate that same extravagant, LAVISH love that Jesus has for us. A love so deep that He laid down his very life for us, so that we may live forever.

Remember,

**For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.**

This type of love for us, this total giving of self for our eternal salvation and happiness, also demands something of us.

Let's step back to the first reading, shall we. After Melchizedek offered the bread and wine, after he pronounced the blessing, Abram was moved to action. What did he do? He gave the Priest 1/10th of his possessions.

Isn't this the greatest, most natural opportunity to ask people to fill the collection basket today? And you know what, perhaps that is exactly what response God is asking of some of you today. But I'm not going to do that.

Look, I remember the first time I told my wife, Judy that I loved her. It wasn't as spontaneous as I like to remember it. What I do recall is that it was a big risk. What if she didn't love me as well? What will my loving her and her loving me mean for us? Could I commit to whatever that may be? In the end, I said it, she said she loved me too, and we never looked back.

Here's the point I'm trying to make. We don't have to worry about does "Jesus love me or not". We see the depth of love on the part of Jesus, that he lays down his life for you, me and the entire universe.

And sometimes, in our sinfulness, we don't feel very loved, but we are. That's the reality of the actions of God.

The total and absolute love for each of us that Jesus has must be answered in love, and as much of it as we can muster.

That is how the Kingdom of God, that Jesus was proclaiming begins to become a greater reality. Because out of love, we could never hurt, harm or injure another. A radical answer of love would end all war. There would be no disease, no racial divisions, no hunger, no hatred. No more drugs, or gangs. No abortion, no divisions between husband and wife, between family members, between neighbors and co-workers.

This not a pie-in-the-sky idealism, this is the constant teaching of Holy Mother Church. And it has been since day one. The hope for the Kingdom of God has led the Church toward that Kingdoms fulfillment, as much as it is possible on Earth. To that end, she has built hospitals and schools. It is why she reaches out to the poor, the homeless, the marginalized, the addict, the unwed mother, the battered spouse, the refugee, the immigrant, the dispossessed.

And in as much as we are a part of this same Church, we are all called to carry on that same work.