

My dear people of God, today, we are celebrating the Solemnity of **Corpus Christi**. **The feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ** gives us an opportunity to focus our attention on this basic mystery of our faith, the Eucharist, and to explore the meaning of the Eucharist in our worship and in our daily living. What is the Eucharist? The Eucharist is both **a sacrament and a sacrifice**. The Eucharist is a sacrament, an outward sign in and through which we meet Jesus, who shares His life of grace with us. In this Sacrament of Eucharist, we do meet Jesus Himself who comes to us under **forms of bread and wine to nourish and strengthen us** for our journey to heaven. We see with human eyes what looks like bread and wine, **but, in the eyes of faith**, we see the **Risen and Living, Lord Jesus Christ (CCC 1357; SC.47)**. The Eucharist is a sacrifice, the re-presentation or re-living in an unbloody manner of Christ's Death on Good Friday and of His Resurrection on Easter Sunday. St. Ignatius of Antioch spoke about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and "one bread that provides **the medicine for immortality**" (cf. Ad Eph.20, 2; Jn.6:51; 58). Thomas Aquinas also affirmed the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the hymn Tantum Ergo: "**Down in adoration falling, this great Sacrament we hail. Faith will tell us Christ is present, when our human senses fail.**"

Readings for today's Corpus Christi focus on the theme - **the blood of the covenant**. The first reading describes the Hebrew covenant ritual that accompanied the fashioning of the Mosaic covenant with the all the people. "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words" (Ex.24:8). The importance of blood in sealing this covenant ritual shows that the **covenant is more than mere words**. It is a matter of life, for **blood was a symbol of life**. The reading from Hebrews also infers from the annual Jewish feast of the Atonement, which was an event when the high priest would enter the sanctuary for the rite of purification. The author connects this with the paschal mystery of Jesus, whose death and resurrection has affected our atonement. **By shedding his own blood, rather than the blood of sacrificial animals** (Heb.9:14), Christ the high priest, brings the act of blood sacrifice to an entirely new and definitive level. Mark's gospel presents the Last Supper in the context of the Passover, and thus links it with the grandeur of the deliverance experienced in the Exodus (Mk.14:12). Because of the clear parallel between the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and of the Lamb sacrificed for the Passover, Mark's choice of this feast as backdrop also emphasizes the Eucharistic Meal as one that pivots on the idea of sacrifice. I just want to draw your attention to the similarity between the old and the new covenant. "This is my blood, the blood of the new covenant, which is to be poured out for many" Mk.14: 22-24) and "This is the blood of the covenant that Yahweh has made with you" (Ex.24:8).

The Eucharist is the highest expression of prayer and the summit of our worship (LG. 11). In John 6: 48-58; Christ reveals the mystery of the Eucharist: he is the Bread of Life who gives himself sacramentally as genuine food. The Third Commandment reminds us to worship the Lord on His Day. Because Christ's Resurrection and the Coming of the Holy Spirit took place on Sunday, the early Christians made the first day of the week "the Lord's Day." As Catholics, we fulfill the Third Commandment by coming together to worship Him at Mass and to receive him, the **Bread of Life for our spiritual nourishment**.

Finally, dear friends, any time we celebrate the Eucharist, we are being reminded of our covenant with God, which we made in our baptism, so let us take the admonishing of St. Paul seriously, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer... a **person should examine himself or herself before eating the bread and drinking the cup** (1 Corinthians 11:27-30). Our Savior complained bitterly to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque about **our lukewarm love, ingratitude, and irreverence** as against his fervent and unconditional love. **St. Augustine wrote that Christ – the same in flesh as walked the earth – gave that same flesh to us to be consumed for our salvation. Moreover, says Augustine, no one eats that Flesh unless he has adored it.... and we sin by not adoring it.** Therefore, let us do our best to acknowledge the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and to approach him with a heart full of love, gratitude and reverence in order to **receive all the blessings in our worship. Amen!**