

18 June 2017 (Body & Blood Sunday, Year A)

Deuteronomy 8:2-3,14-16; Psalm 147:12-15,19-20; 1Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6:51-58.

I am living bread!

Jesus tells us that he is our living bread – bread that gives life. This discourse is based on a longer discourse where Jesus has been speaking to his disciples about the need to be his disciples and to have faith in him. To eat the bread that is Jesus is to enter into a deep relationship with Jesus. We are again invited to enter into a deep personal relationship with Jesus who is our Christ and Lord in the same way as close friends get to know each other deeply and intimately.

To all who believe in him Jesus offers them his own body and blood as real food and real drink; true nourishment for the journey of discipleship. The Body and Blood of Christ nourish us as we continue to get to know and follow Jesus.

The bread we eat in the Eucharist is living bread; it is the very flesh of Jesus Christ. When we eat of this bread we become an integral part of Jesus himself – as St Paul writes: it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me! Through faith and through the Eucharist we get to participate in the life of Christ and through Christ in the life of God himself. This is a great mystery that we form part of.

Jesus tells us that those who eat and drink of his Body and Blood will live forever. Although we know that our life here on earth will come to an end, we believe that by participating in the life of God now, with him we will share in eternity. The Body and Blood of Jesus give us this sharing in divine life.

Flesh without blood is dead meat, which is why Jesus gives us both Body (flesh) and Blood to eat and drink; the Eucharistic meal is a true and full meal. Within a Jewish context, the blood of the animal represented its spirit, its life. On the Old Testament law Jews are forbidden to drink the blood of an animal because this would mean taking its life. In the New Testament Jesus invites us to drink of his blood so that we can have the fullness of his life in us.

We fully and completely participate in the Eucharistic meal every time we eat the Body of Christ or we drink the Blood of Christ. When we participate in the Eucharist by eating and drinking both the Body and the Blood of Christ, the symbolism of what Jesus gave us becomes more clear. The Church encourages us to participate in the Eucharist by taking part in both the Body and the Blood of Jesus whenever this is possible.

In our daily life we regularly need to nourish our bodies with healthy food and drink. The same applies to our spiritual life; the Body and Blood of Christ is the nourishment that keeps us united with our Lord and Christ. Hence we are encouraged to participate regularly in this great mystery.

Let us not be afraid to share and become part of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Fr Mario