

## Solemnity Feast of the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ

THE GOSPEL: Mc. 14:12-16, 22-26

On the first day of the Week of Unleavened Bread, the day of sacrificing the Passover lamb, the disciples said to Jesus, “Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?” “He sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Just follow that person. Whatever house he enters, you should say to the owner of the house: The teacher said, “Where is the room where I can eat the Passover with my disciples? And he will show you a spacious room upstairs, prepared: and there prepare a feast for us.” The two disciples left. When they entered the city, they saw everything just as He had said. And they prepared the Passover feast.

During the meal, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take this, this is my body." And he took a cup of wine, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them: “This is my blood of the Covenant, shed for many people. Truly I tell you, I will never drink the fruit of the vine again until the day I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

REFLECTION: **The Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus** – 6/2/2024 – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen

“BELIEVE AND FEEL”

Today's Gospel of the Feast of Corpus Christi is a narrative account of the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples, before his suffering. In this Upper Room, Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist, to become the Bread of Life for humanity, when He gave His Body, the very divine and eternal Life. Let us meditate together on two points: (1) The Meaning of the Bread of Life and (2) The Meaning of Giving.

### 1. Meaning of the Bread of Life

Believing in the Mystery of the Eucharist is not easy at all. If in the past many people could not accept that the *Flesh of Jesus* became the *Bread of Eternal Life*, then it is difficult for people today to believe in the Mystery of *Conversionem substantiae* from a bread that was still colored and that taste – after the Word of Consecration becomes the Flesh of Christ.

Many people cannot understand the mystery of "transformation", the *Lord's Flesh becomes bread* and *bread becomes the Holy Body of Christ*, more deeply because they do not believe in the power of God to change and do not believe in God is saying it is an incarnate God – the Spirit in finite humans.

In Hebrew (Jewish) culture, flesh and blood are just humans in the lowly earthly condition, subject to birth and death. Jesus wants us to fully accept God's "human nature" (in its lowly

physical and earthly condition) as our possession, and that "human nature" imparts to us its divinity.

*Jesus is the Bread of Life*, the bread that acts in people. When people eat ordinary bread, the human body digests and assimilates the bread. And when eating the bread of life - the Body of Jesus Christ - it is this bread that assimilates and transforms each person: Christ transforms believers, gives them His life and incorporates them into His life. Because the life of Jesus is eternal life, when he communicates that life to believers through eating His Body, they also share in eternal life.

In the Gospel of St. John (John 6: 51-58), Jesus firmly affirmed: *"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the day of death"*. The above statement speaks to the importance of receiving the Eucharist:

- The body eats a limited amount of manna, so the life of the body is limited.
- The soul that eats the Flesh of Christ is eternal life, so it attains eternal life.

Jesus also used the image of Trinitarian life to describe Christians' union with Him through eating the Bread of Life: *"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me, and as I live through the Father, so he who feeds on me will live through me."*

God the Father and God the Son both exist for themselves and exist towards each other, becoming one. Here, the person who eats the flesh of Jesus participates in the life of the Trinity, when existing towards God and becomes one with Him. Christ lives, so those who eat Him also live and live fully like Him.

## 2. Meaning of giving.

People often ask the question: *"Why didn't the all-powerful God choose another easier method, but chose to incarnate, live a life of suffering and then die humiliatingly like that to redeem humans?"* The theological answer may be too lofty for many people to accept, because theology answers: *"Jesus chose the incarnation because he wanted to let people know that humans have a very valuable value so noble that He did not hesitate to take on a human body, and also through his incarnation He raised human dignity."*

We can give a popular explanation through the following illustrative example:

A guy wants to find a life partner, but stays in one place, doesn't go to the girl's house, doesn't find her, doesn't talk to her, doesn't get to know her, but stays at home, calls, sends messages, emails ... to confessed, how could the other girl accept?

It's the same with Jesus, if He keeps calling down from heaven: *"I love you, I'm willing to die for you..."* then how can people verify that love and respond? Therefore, Jesus must come down to humans, accept life together, accompany and share, and be willing to sacrifice to save humans, the object of his love. That's right, he did that, and the most eloquent proof is *"dying for the one you love"*.

A catechist asked the question: *"What do people need most when they love each other?"* A few students think: We need sympathy, we need financial stability, we need souvenir gifts, we need love letters ... But most agree with the answer: *"When people love each other, they need each other."* Yes, for me, that is the truest feeling of lovers. When they love each other, letters, gifts, money, words... are just dependent things, what they need is each other, they need to completely dedicate themselves to each other, they need to be united with each other... *though two are one* ... and that is also the substance of the Sacrament of Marriage.

More than anyone else, Jesus is the King of Love, He understands the lack of people who are the object of His love. The words and actions he left behind are precious, but what is more precious and what people need more? What can demonstrate love more than the giving of His body to humans? And the Eucharist, when given to humans, carries the full meaning of a union, both physical and spiritual. Indeed, Christ demonstrated His love for humanity by the ultimate gift of His Holy Body. That is the most eloquent proof and the most meaningful of giving. Give your life, give it to the last drop of blood. Giving beyond all giving is giving everything, without comparison or calculation. Give with true love.

As in the song *"Tantum ego - This Sacrament"* that we always sing during Eucharistic Adoration, there is the line: *"Let us compensate with faith, even though our senses do not feel anything"* which shows that the Eucharist is a mystery. It is not possible to observe the transformation with physical eyes, but with the eyes of faith and the feeling of the heart that is loved by Jesus and that we love Him.

*Lord Jesus, our physical eyes cannot recognize You in the bread, but the faith You give us recognizes that the bread and wine offered on the altar are the Flesh and Blood that You sacrificed as food nourish our souls. May God give us a steadfast faith, so that we will never doubt Your presence or departed from You. Amen.*