

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Cycle A

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a; 1Corinthians 10:16-17; and John 6:51-58

At the conclusion of a study tour in Rome for the fiftieth anniversary of the start of Vatican II, my group held what was supposed to be a private mass at a side altar in St. Peter's Basilica. I was surprised to see that our communion line included several elderly Italian men in suits and a cohort of southeast Asians. "Where did they come from?" I thought, "And why would they join in our English liturgy?" So many different people are fed by, fed on, Jesus Christ! Even though you and I are so different, even though each of the 7+ billion people on earth are, each and every one, so different, Jesus Christ satisfies our needs. Paul captures this reality when he says in verse 17, "we all partake of the one loaf." This is reinforced in vs 16, when Paul asks, "Is not the cup of blessing... a participation *of* the blood of Christ?" No "*in*" in the Greek, but rather a sense that the participation finds as its source Christ's blood and body.

Verse 17 holds another key idea: "We, though many, are one body." When we come to Jesus for the fulfillment of our needs, we are drawn into a communion or fellowship with all the other people who come to Jesus. In verse 16, when Paul asks, "Is not the cup of blessing that we bless a participation of the blood of Christ?" *participation* is better translated as *communion* or *fellowship*. To eat and drink the Eucharist is to become one with Jesus and with the whole community of believers. The original word in Greek, *koinonia*, includes human community. For example, in the Acts of the Apostles, the early Christians had *koinonia* together. Throughout Scripture, love for God has always been intertwined with love for others. It is why we have not dried up as a Church without the physical Eucharist during the pandemic: communion with each other is also our communion with Christ.

I bring up these seemingly esoteric points because two situations are opening before us. They both call for decisive action. On the one hand, America is moving out of sheltering-in-place. How can we do so safely? How can we balance our weariness with prudence? On the other hand, George Floyd's murder has forced America to confront its sinful habits of racism. How do we go about growing the changes in our attitudes, politics, education and economics?

If we are to come up with real solutions to both these dilemmas, we must drink deeply from the well of the Living Water. We must dine fully on the Bread of Life. The love and creativity they call for is beyond human ability. I mean, honestly, do you know how to solve either one? Nope, me neither. We have scientific guidelines for the pandemic, but, oh, so many moving parts, not to mention the human limitations of ego, fear and ignorance! Likewise, addressing systemic racism will require so many changes. We need inspiration to find creative solutions and to work together in fellowship, each member making his/her contribution with an eye to the whole community of humankind.

Following standard covenant format, Deuteronomy includes in chapter 8 a reminder of what God has already done for the Israelites. God has provided food and drink in astonishingly inventive ways: bread, like dew, every morning and water gushing from a rock. Deuteronomy is saying to us, if God has done such innovative things to get our ancestors out of a jam, act as if God can do it again! *To remember* in Hebrew is to do more than just mentally recall; one must respond dynamically.¹ Trust. Pray. Choose life that you and your descendants may live (Dt 30:19b).

Jesus reinforces this in John 6 when he calls himself, "the living bread" and calls God, "the living Father." If we want to make life-giving plans and changes, we must open ourselves to receive the resources God is offering. We must make way for God to dazzle. May this feast day show us how to receive the fellowship of Jesus' body and blood in order to live in fellowship with our brothers and sisters!

- ❖ Listen to John Angotti's "[I'm Just Sayin'](#)" as you design your contribution to safe reopening and to ending racism. What resonates with you?
- ❖ Where do you need God's creative and life-giving solutions? Invite God to brainstorm with you.

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¹ Nagel, E., et al. *Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers & Proclaimers of the Word*, LTP, p. 198