

# Corpus Christi - The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

## **First reading:**

*The Blessing of Melchizedek  
(Genesis 14.18-20)*

Melchizedek is a historically mysterious figure, king of Salem, who suddenly appears from nowhere to greet Abraham and bless him. In gratitude, Abraham gives Melchizedek one-tenth of the spoil he has just won in battle. The only other mention of Melchizedek in the Old Testament is in Psalm 110, where he is the priest-king of Jerusalem. The early verses of this Psalm are frequently used in the New Testament to show the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of the Father at the Resurrection: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.' In the New Testament, the whole psalm is therefore understood of Christ, and so in the Letter to the Hebrews the verse, 'you are a priest according to the line of Melchizedek' (originally addressed to the priest-king of Jerusalem) is understood to refer to Christ's priesthood. Christ is a priest not in the line of Aaron, but in the line of Melchizedek. The Letter further argues from the fact that Melchizedek blesses Abraham that Melchizedek's priesthood is superior to that of Abraham and Aaron. So, by this slightly involved explanation, in this first reading we are celebrating the priesthood of Christ, superior to the priesthood of the Old Law.

## **Question:**

*What does it mean that all Christians share in the priesthood of Christ?*

## **Second reading:**

*The Lord's Supper  
(1 Corinthians 11.23-26)*

From several points of view, this is one of the most precious passages of the New Testament. To begin with, the terms 'received' and 'passed on' are technical terms of the rabbinic process of oral tradition; they show that what Paul is about to say is part of the tradition conserved in the Christian community. Second, it shows us that the repetition of this rite was seen to bring to the participants participation in the death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus - worthily or unworthily. And Paul's purpose is to rebuke the Corinthians for taking part in the Eucharistic supper without due seriousness. Third, it shows some of the most precious aspects of the Eucharistic meal: it is the sealing of the new covenant in the cup of Christ's blood, that covenant that brings to each individual the union with the Father wrought by Christ's death. Fourth, as Paul's chief rebuke to the Corinthians is that they are disunited and selfish at their Eucharist, treating it just like an ordinary dinner, neglecting one another's needs, it is a reminder to us that the Eucharist is a celebration of the Body of Christ, in which we are all united in love, and in which we all depend on one another. Is this really our impression of the Sunday Mass?

## **Question:**

*Which of the aspects of the Eucharist is most important to you?*

**Gospel:**      *Jesus gives Food to the Crowds*

*(Luke 9.11-17)*

On the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ should we not have the gospel reading about the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper? No, the Church puts before us this reading of the wonderful gift of food by Jesus.

It is a sort of open-air picnic Eucharist that begins with Jesus talking to them about the Kingdom of God; this is what happens in the earlier part of our Eucharist, as we listen to the readings and the homily on them. Then he heals those who are in need of healing, and that means all of us, for we are always in need of healing in various ways. If you don't think you need to be healed, don't come to the Eucharist. Only then does he raise his eyes to heaven, bless the bread and distribute it, just as Jesus gives himself to us in the Eucharist.

A sign of the generosity and plenty of Jesus' gifts in the Eucharist is given by the 12 baskets of leftovers, ready for consumption by the 12 tribes of the new Israel. In the same way, on the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ we share joyfully in the sustenance which Jesus gives to us and to the huge numbers of his followers across the world.

**Question:**

*How can I participate more fully in Jesus' gift of the Eucharist?*

*Better preparation beforehand?*

*Reflection afterwards?*

*Fuller attention during the Mass?*