

## FEAST OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

**1st Reading:** Genesis 14:18-20 [Melchizedek brought out bread and wine]

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 110 ["You are a priest forever, in the line of Melchizedek"]

**2nd Reading:** 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 [when you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord]

**Gospel:** Luke 9:11b-17 [They all ate and had enough]

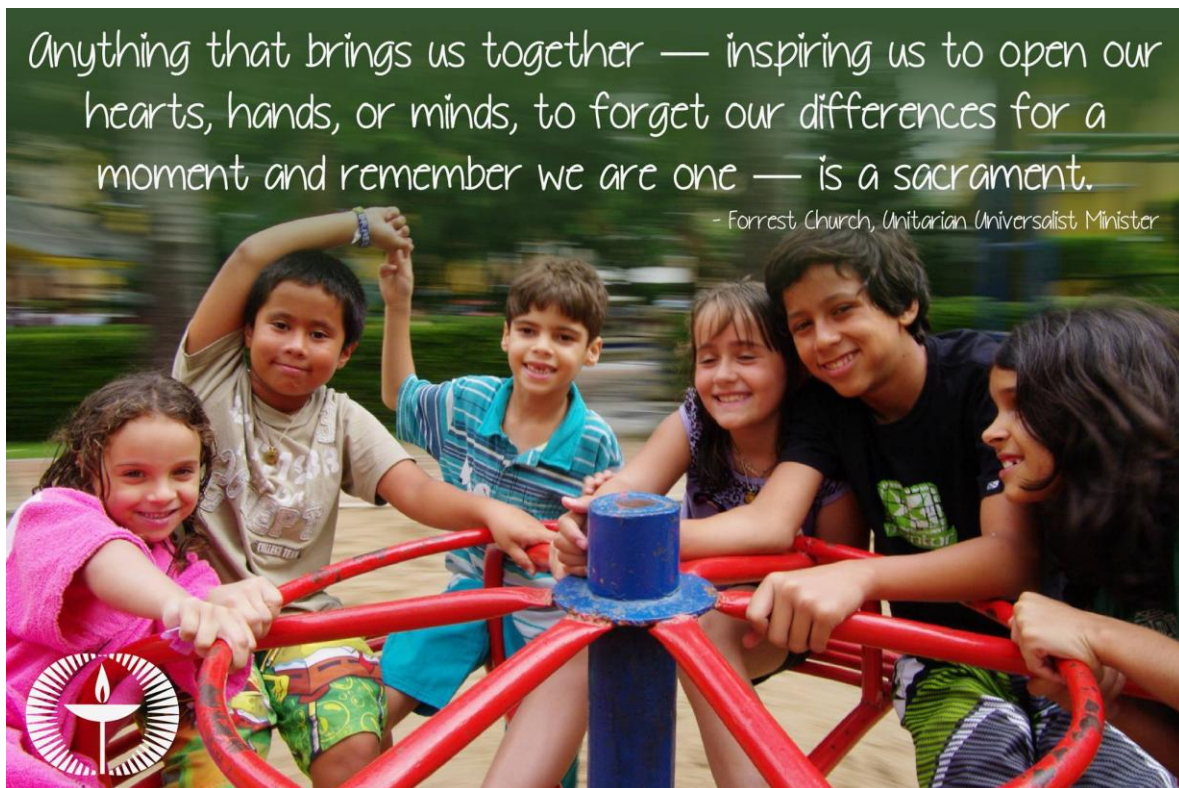
### A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured. As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for this is a deserted place."

But Jesus said to them, "Give them some food yourselves."

They replied, "We have only five loaves & two fish - unless we are to go and *buy* food for all these people." Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty." They did so and made them all sit down. Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, Jesus looked up to heaven, said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate until they had enough. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

### The Gospel of the Lord



♪ A-men. El Cuerpo de Cristo. A-men. La Sangre del Señor  
Eating your body, drinking your blood, we become what we receive. Amen, A-men. ♪

How many languages do you hear in that refrain? There are 3 - English, Spanish & Hebrew [Amen]. Do you know what the Spanish words mean?

**El Cuerpo de Cristo** - *The Body of Christ* & **La Sangre del Señor** - *The Blood of the Lord*.

That song is a meditation on the meaning of this feast, and of the Eucharist itself.

*"We become what we receive."* What incredible words! What a wonderful gift.

It puts to music the truth that we not only receive the body and life-blood of Christ, *we are* the presence of Christ in our world.

That's why I often sing during the Eucharistic prayer, ♪ *"We are the body of Christ."* ♪

This feast, and every Mass, is a challenge to *see* Christ in each other, and to *be* Christ for each other. This truth is beautifully expressed in a prayer that is part of the United Methodist Eucharistic Prayer:

*"Father, Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine.  
Make them for us the Body & Blood of Christ,*

*that we may be for the world the Body of Christ, redeemed by his Blood."*

A similar prayer can be found in each of the Catholic Eucharistic Prayers, a prayer that the Holy Spirit will transform the bread and wine into the Body & Blood of Christ [before the words of Jesus at the Last Supper] and another prayer, after the memorial acclamation, that the same Spirit will transform the congregation into the living presence of Christ in the world.

The Gospel today is the only miracle story which is in all four Gospels.

In the story, Jesus says: "Give them some food yourselves."

He is inviting them to become his presence in the world - to pass on what they have received.

The apostles answer, "we don't have *enough*." Jesus says, by action as much as by words, "When I am with you, you have enough; you are enough."

The Spirit then performs *two* miracles, the first one was to get more than 5,000 people to organize themselves into groups of 50 and to sit down. And there were probably more than 15,000 - if most of the men had wives and children there.

The Spirit says, in effect, because I am in you, you are enough, you can help each other. Then there is another miracle - Jesus feeds them all - and there are leftovers!

Some commentators say that what happened was that Jesus inspired the people to share what they had brought, but I think that both miracles happened.

That reminds me of an old Chinese story about the difference between heaven and hell. Hell is described as people sitting around a wonderful banquet table, filled with the tastiest food imaginable, yet they are starving - because they had to eat it with forks that were 4 feet long and cannot get the food into their mouths.

Heaven is the same wonderful banquet, the same 4 foot forks, but a group of people who are happy and well fed, because they are using the forks *to feed each other*.

The reading from the first letter to the Corinthians is *our* story - the story of how we are fed by Christ and the Spirit of God and are called to feed one another. Paul writes, "I *received* from the Lord what I handed on to you." So we are called to share what we have received.

On the night he was betrayed, when everything seemed to be falling apart, Jesus gave himself as our food. He says, "take and eat, this is my body, this is my blood." Christians have been diving into this mystery since that Holy Thursday night.

[This feast of the Body and Blood of Christ was established in 1264. It is about that night. It's also called *Corpus Christi*, which is Latin for "The Body of Christ" and the name of a city in Texas.]

People of all Christian traditions have written, discussed and argued for centuries about the Body and Blood of Christ [also called the "Blessed Sacrament"].

Is this mystery about the meal we share with each other as *members* of the Body of Christ? Or is it about the sacrament we reserve for the sick? Or is it about the real presence of Christ which we worship in the tabernacle?

And the answer the Church gives is YES! It is **all three**, -- and its meaning is diminished when one aspect alone is elevated above the others or overlooked & neglected. If we are to understand what this feast means, we need to always all of them together.

One Theologian expresses it this way, "When we receive the consecrated host, we eat the Church; when we receive the precious blood of Christ, we drink the cross."

We "*eat the Church*" - we commit ourselves to love and care for the whole Body of Christ, our sisters and brothers and all the others Christ loves.

We "*drink the cross*." One of the reasons the Church strongly encourages the practice of drinking from the cup at Mass is to express the full meaning of the Eucharist, since this liturgical action expresses our willingness to accept the cross of Christ, and our faith that we are already beginning to celebrate the heavenly banquet with him.

In the reading from St. Paul, and in the words of the Eucharistic Prayer, we hear the command, "Do this in memory of me." If we are to understand the full meaning of the Eucharist, we need to hear not only the command to celebrate Mass here and all over the world, as important as that is.

The Eucharist is not something we are called to watch, it is not something to discuss or figure out. If we are to truly live what Jesus teaches, we need to DO the Eucharist -  
and not just in church.

We need to hear the words "*do this in memory of me*" this way:

Love one another as I have loved you! - Do **this** in memory of me!

Forgive one another as I have forgiven you! - Do **this** in memory of me!

Feed one another as I have fed you! - Do **this** in memory of me!

Let us pray that we can truly live the command of Christ.



There is a song composed by Joe Uvegas, who grew up in Schoharie Co. where I live  
which reflects the essence of this feast.

♪ Receive who you are, do not be frightened. Come say "Amen" to all of your life.  
Open your heart, come and be lightened, Singing I am the Body of Christ.

And I am the Body of Christ, singing I am, dancing I am.

And I am the light of the world

'Cause I see who lives in me, Yeah, Lord, I receive. ♪

