

June 14, 2009

**Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ**

Ex 24:3-8 \* Heb 9:11-15 \* Mk 14:12-16, 22-26

On this feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, we can truly rejoice in one of the greatest gifts that Jesus has given us. On this feast of the Body and Blood of Christ a good question to ask ourselves is: Can I be a good Catholic and not attend Mass regularly? This is an often asked question. The answer is quick and easy. No. We cannot be a good Catholic and fail to attend Mass regularly. The Mass, the Eucharist, is what makes us Catholic. Without the Eucharist there is no Church. We must understand that what Jesus has given us is far more than a mere symbol.

The Gospels are very clear. Jesus meant what He said. There is absolutely no hint that Jesus was speaking symbolically. He was speaking literally. It is clear that doing this was not a suggestion. It was a commandment. Jesus said, Do this in memory of me. Our understanding of this is important. Just as the people told Moses they would do everything the Lord has told us, we are called to do everything Jesus has commanded us. We are to live the same self-sacrificing love.

We can't follow what Jesus said when he said, eat my body and drink my blood, if we don't come to Mass in order to do it. It can't be done unless we gather together as a community and celebrate the Eucharist, and do it on a regular basis. It is even listed in the Ten Commandments when it says: Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day. That doesn't mean that Sunday is supposed to be just another day off. It means we are supposed to take the time to honor the Sabbath on that day.

On this feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, it is also important to remember that when we celebrate the Holy Eucharist, it isn't just coming to Mass for an hour and then forgetting what it means the rest of the week and the rest of our lives too. When we celebrate the

Eucharist, we are invited to eat his flesh and drink his blood in the sense that we are to include everything he teaches into our lives.

This is the meaning of eating the Body and Blood of Christ. Having a total union with him in our way of thinking and living. The Eucharist is not just a magic meal that creates community. It assumes that community exists before the bread and wine are brought forward. The real challenge before us every time we approach this altar is to ask more questions of ourselves. If we say we believe that Jesus is truly present in this Eucharist, at what level do we participate in this meal? Do we come to take or do we come to give?

Our sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ should lead to more almsgiving, fasting, or prayers; or maybe our sharing in this meal could simply lead us to deeper questions about our commitment to the faith we profess. Some people need to stop treating the Eucharist as something that divides us from other religions and, instead, see it as a way to unity. As we consider our participation here, let us ask God that our participation in the Eucharist, not be an empty, automatic sharing, but rather a life-giving one that brings us to a deeper commitment to the true food and true drink that is offered in this sacred meal.

Last, but not least, let us truly rejoice that we have the Eucharist available and rejoice in that great gift that Jesus gave us, so that we can continue to experience Christ over and over in our lives today. It is a great gift from Christ and truly something to celebrate.