

MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

Year C

Genesis 14:18-20
Psalm 110:1, 2, 3, 4
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Luke 9:11b-17

Gathering

(An unlit candle, a Bible open to this week's gospel, along with a loaf of fresh bread and some wine or grapes are arranged on a table in the gathering place.)

Prayer

(The candle is lit and members are invited to pause in silent attention to the presence of God with them. After a time of quiet, members pray as follows in two alternating groups.)

Leader: Let us pray...

I: Whoso of this food partakes,
Does not rend the Lord nor breaks;
Christ is whole to all that taste:

II: Thousands are, as one, receivers,
One, as thousands of believers,
Eats of him who cannot waste.

I: When the sacrament is broken,
Doubt not, but believe 'tis spoken,
That each sever'd outward token
doth the very whole contain.

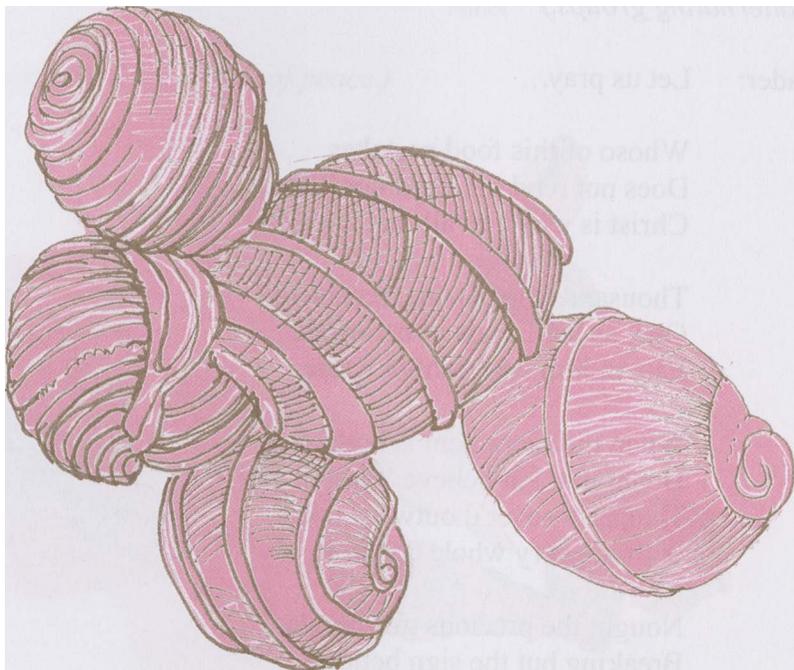
II: Nought the precious gift divides,
Breaking but the sign betides
Jesus still the same abides,
still unbroken does remain.



HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)

When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: “What draws you to this gospel?” “Where do you resist this gospel?” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)



Reflection

A change in the New Roman Missal has us now declare, “I believe” rather than “We believe.” While this change emphasizes the importance of the personal embrace of faith, the communal remains essential. Our God is a communion. Eucharist is a celebration of this communion. The church is a mystery of communion.

The communal theme is hinted at in this week’s gospel. Jesus presides, but he sends out the twelve with the loaves and fishes. They could not go to each person individually – that would have taken hours and hours. So Jesus had them gather the people into groups of 50 so that they could take what was given them and serve each other. The mystery of communion is at work here. In the gatherings, they receive together the nourishment that is offered; they are sharing the loaves and fishes together; they are sharing with each other.

This sense of community is sometimes missing from people’s understanding of what is going on at Mass. It is not sufficient to say that it is the priest who *celebrates* Mass. The priest presides, but the whole assembly *celebrates*. The choir is not there to perform; it serves our communal worship by helping us all to sing with *one* voice.

Individualism intrudes on Eucharist when people come late and leave early. (Did you ever notice how much more room there sometimes is in the church after communion?) We are not just sharing with each other at Mass. We are sharing in Christ – together. The body of Christ receives the body of Christ or as we prayed at the outset from the Sequence for this feast: “Thousands are, as one, receivers”.

When it comes time to “go to communion,” we approach together, not just individually. We first share the sign of peace as an expression of our union with one another in Christ. It is our communion with the Lord and with each other in Christ that is being emphasized in the recent rubric that asks everyone for whom it is possible to remain standing until all have received.

Like the twelve in today’s gospel, “Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion” can be said to witness to the call that all of us have to be “ministers of communion” in the world about us.

Questions For Reflection And Conversation

- ◆ How aware are you of *the others* who are with you at Mass?
- ◆ How similar or different is your sense of *communion* when gathered at Mass or in your small community? What is that all about?
- ◆ What would enrich the sense of community at your parish celebration of Eucharist? How might you/your small community contribute to that enrichment?
- ◆ What would it mean and what would it take for you to be more of a “*minister of communion*” in your family or work place?

HEARING THE GOSPEL’S LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: “What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?” “How are you/we being called to live in response to God’s word?” After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ For the next week, during your prayer, reflect on how you can better say “we” instead of “I” in your life.
- ◆ Organize a “Hunger Banquet” through Oxfam America (www.hunger-banquet.org). This is a memorable, interactive event that brings hunger and poverty issues to life. It also helps build community.
- ◆ There is nothing more unifying in the world these days than the issue of climate. Google *Laudato Si’* and you will find a link that will take you directly to Pope Francis’ encyclical on the Vatican website.

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?” “What

do you say to him in response?” The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.

(Following this sharing, members join in two groups to pray as follows.)

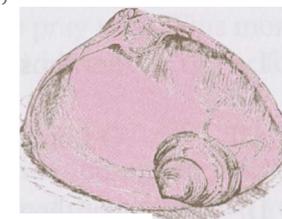
Leader: Let us pray...

I: Lo! the angel’s food is given
To the pilgrim who has striven;
see the children’s bread from heaven,
which on dogs may not be spent.

II: Truth the ancient types fulfilling,
Isaac bound, a victim willing,
Paschal lamb, its lifeblood spilling,
manna to the fathers sent.

I: Very bread, good shepherd, tend us,
Jesu, of your love befriend us,
You refresh us, you defend us,
Your eternal goodness send us
In the land of life to see.

II: You who all things can and know,
Who on earth such food bestow,
Grant us with your saints, though lowest,
Where the heav’nly feast you show,
Fellow heirs and guests to be. Amen. Alleluia.



From the Sequence for this feast

(The session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)

(Note to Leader: In anticipation of next week’s session, invite members to bring with them pictures of family and friends who have died.)