

Reading for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi

Sunday June 19th 2022

1st Reading: Genesis 14:18-20

Melchizedek brought bread and wine and pronounced a blessing

Melchizedek king of Salem brought bread and wine; he was a priest of God Most High. He pronounced this blessing:

‘Blessed be Abraham by God Most High,
creator of heaven and earth,
and blessed be God Most High
for handing over your enemies to you.’
And Abraham gave him a tithe of everything.

Responsorial: Psalm 109:1-4

R./: You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek

The Lord’s revelation to my Master:

‘Sit on my right:
I will put your foes beneath your feet.’ (R./)

The Lord will send from Zion
your sceptre of power:
rule in the midst of all your foes. (R./)

A prince from the day of your birth
on the holy mountains;
from the womb before the daybreak
I begot you. (R./)

The Lord has sworn an oath he will not change.
‘You are a priest for ever,
a priest like Melchizedek of old.’
You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek. (R./)

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming the death of the Lord. This is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you: that on the same night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and thanked God for it and broke it, and he said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me.’
In the same way he took the cup after supper, and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.’
Until the Lord comes, therefore, every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming his death.

Gospel: Luke 9:11-17

They all ate and were filled

Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing. It was late afternoon when the Twelve came to him and said, 'Send the people away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and food; for we are in a lonely place here.'

He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' But they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go ourselves and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. But he said to his disciples, 'Get them to sit down in parties of about fifty.'

They did so and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the crowd. They all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps remaining were collected they filled twelve baskets.

Short reflection on the readings for today

Sitting together for a meal can generate a special feeling of togetherness. Each of us will have our own memories of table companionship or fellowship. Many of these will be happy experiences of celebration and laughter, of love received and shared. Some memories of table fellowship may be sad, times when we were more aware of one who was absent than of those who were present. Jesus shared table many times with his disciples. It is likely that, when sharing food with his disciples, he also shared with them his vision of God's kingdom. At table, the disciples imbibed something of Jesus' mind and heart and spirit. Of all the meals he shared with them, the meal that stayed in their memory more than any other was their last meal together, what came to be known as the last supper. Today's gospel gives us Mark's account, his word-picture, of that last supper.

This last meal Jesus shared with his disciples stood out in their memory, capturing the imagination of generations of disciples right up to ourselves. He did more than share his vision with the disciples; he gave them himself in a way he had never done before, and in a way that anticipated the death he would die for them and for all, on the following day. In giving himself in the form of the bread and wine of the meal, he was declaring himself to be their food and drink. In calling on them to take and eat, to take and drink, he was asking them to take their stand with him, to give themselves to him as he was giving himself to them.

Jesus intended his last supper to be a beginning rather than an end. It was the first Eucharist. Ever since that meal, the church has gathered regularly in his name, to do and say what he did and said at that last supper — taking bread and wine, blessing both, breaking the bread and giving both for disciples to eat and drink.

Jesus continues to give himself as food and drink to his followers. He also continues to encourage his followers to take their stand with him, to take in all he stands for, living by his values, walking in his way, even if that means the cross. Whenever we come to Mass and receive the Eucharist, we are making a number of important statements. We are acknowledging Jesus as our bread of life, as the one who alone can satisfy our deepest hungers. We are also declaring that we will throw in our lot with him, as it were, that we will follow in his way and be faithful to him all our lives, in response to his faithfulness to us. In that sense, celebrating the Eucharist is not something we do lightly. Our familiarity with the Mass and the frequency with which we celebrate it can dull our senses to the full significance of what we are doing. Every time we gather for the Eucharist, we find ourselves once more in that upper room with the first disciples, and the last supper and all its significance is present again to us.