



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 18th June 2017 - The Body and Blood of Christ

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

Taken from the Gospel for Sunday 18th June 2017 - The True Bread of Life (John 6:51-58)

Jesus said to the Jews: 'I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.' Then the Jews started arguing with one another: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' they said. Jesus replied: 'I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.'



3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

This is the final section of Jesus' great discourse in the gospel of John on the Eucharist, delivered in the synagogue at Capernaum. It is in the form of a synagogue-sermon, commenting in turn on the phrases of Psalm 78, 'He gave them bread - from heaven - to eat'. Jesus explains that these words are truly fulfilled not by Moses' historic gift of manna in the desert, but by the Father's continuous and repeated gift of Eucharistic bread. The discourse has the same pattern as the Mass, instruction followed by eating. The first two sections of the discourse were about God's gift of revelation in Christ, which is accepted and assimilated by belief in the teaching of Jesus. Now we come to the final section on God's gift of Christ as food. Particularly striking are two points. Firstly, the stress on eating: the word used for 'eat my flesh' is full of the reality of eating; it really means 'chew', and designates the sacramental eating as a real assimilation of the nourishing food. The second point is that 'my flesh for the life of the world' links firmly to the Last Supper: the Christ that we receive is the Christ at the very moment of his redemptive act of self-offering, an act which continues throughout time and into eternity.

What is the best way to prepare for Holy Communion?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 18th June 2017



First Reading: *Manna from Heaven*

Deuteronomy 8:2-3. 14-16

Moses said to the people: 'Remember how the Lord your God led you for forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, to test you and know your inmost heart - whether you would keep his commandments or not. He humbled you, he made you feel hunger, he fed you with manna which neither you nor your fathers had known, to make you understand that man does not live on bread alone but that man lives on everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Do not then forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery: who guided you through this vast and dreadful wilderness, a land of fiery serpents, scorpions, thirst; who in this waterless place brought you water from the hardest rock; who in this wilderness fed you with manna that your fathers had not known.'

Here the Church sets before us the model for the Eucharist, that is, God's care in feeding his people during the forty-year desert trek of the Exodus from Egypt. During this time the Israelites were fed with manna; they called this 'bread from heaven', so that it has become the model for the Eucharistic bread. As in all folk-tales, the story has gradually grown in the telling, but originally manna seems to have been the wholly unexpected and seemingly-miraculous provision of a sweet substance exuded from a tamarisk bush. The Hebrews did not know what it was, and, with a word-play typical of the Bible, etymologized it as 'man-hu', the Hebrew for 'What is it?' The reading also stresses that this heavenly gift was a symbol of divine Wisdom, God's revelation of himself given from heaven. Hence the saying, quoted by Jesus to Satan during his Testing in the Desert, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' The manna became the symbol and reminder of God's unfailing care for his people throughout their journey, just as the Eucharist is the expression of God's care for his people today.

How does the Eucharist reveal God's love?

Second Reading: *The One Body of Christ*

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ. The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf.

Paul, in writing to that difficult and divided community at Corinth, chides them for their disunity and selfishness. There were some rich members of the community, who got to the Eucharist early, took all the best places, and proceeded to unpack their hampers and feast, while the later comers – presumably the workers and slaves – justifiably felt excluded and remained hungry. In the strongest terms Paul insists that the Eucharist must be the symbol and expression of unity, and that those who prevent it being so are making themselves 'answerable for the body and blood of the Lord'. Paul seems to use 'the body of Christ' interchangeably of both the Eucharistic bread and the Eucharistic body which is the community, united in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It is difficult to see when he means one, and when the other. He obviously regards them both as equally important and equally sacred. Later in the letter he will explain that the community is an organism, in which everyone has their own, individually special part to play, all living with the Spirit of Christ as the life-giving principle. Unless this life is truly shared, it is distorted and fails in its purpose.

How is it possible to make the Eucharist an expression of unity?

“...the Eucharist must be the symbol and expression of unity.”

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*
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