

Body and Blood of Christ

Lk 9: 11B-17

Dear Friends,

When Jesus called his disciples to ministry, he knew they needed help. They needed food for the spirit. This began with his teachings. It was symbolized in the story of the loaves and fish in today's gospel. He comforted them with the message of God's saving love. Jesus knew they would be challenged in many ways. In the Eucharist, He gave them the gift of his abiding presence to strengthen their security in a continuing experience of his love.

Ever since Vatican II we, as a Christian community, have worked to create a similar experience of Jesus. This is through the renewal of the liturgy as the driving force of our communal transformation. In the active participation in the liturgy we continually try to make the liturgical prayer the source and summit of our faith. Here we encounter

Jesus as the first disciples did. This insight is part of the iconic statement from the Council's liturgy document.

“The celebration of the Eucharist, as an action of Christ and the people of God...is the center of the whole Christian life, for the universal church, the local church and for each and every one of the faithful....the Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all its power flows....All who are made children of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of the church, to take part in the sacrifice and to eat the Lord's supper.” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1963, #2, 10, 41)

In the Eucharist, true active participation means that we are asking God to make us an instrument of his peace and a contributor to God's plan for salvation. Through the liturgy we are becoming the Body of Christ to continue the proclamation of the Good News to all humanity.

In the reception of Communion, we are energized in this call to continue Christ's work. Jesus comes to us in the most intimate way possible to renew us into his image. This presence is first and foremost about Jesus calling us into a new reality. It is a time to share at the deepest level with One we know loves us. This conversation should be about God's plan first. Then we can approach our many concerns and worries. Love is the dominating dimension of the basic Eucharistic moment of grace and intimacy in the reception of Communion. Jesus is calling us into a new way. There should be less concern about ourselves and more concern about God's presence in our brothers and sisters along with the needs of our family, friends, community and the world.

In the time of reception of the Eucharist we are never closer to the words of Teresa of Avila that describe prayer as a loving conversation with someone we know loves us.

The depth and beauty of this encounter with Christ cannot be more personal and intimate if we are truly aware, accepting and

attentive to Jesus' presence in the depth of our heart. Along with the personal experience of love, Jesus' presence is always calling us out of ourselves and our petty concerns to the loving service for others especially in sharing the Good News of God's love in Christ Crucified and Christ Risen.

We all would do well to examine ourselves to see how much effort and attention we give to this encounter with the living Christ at the time of communion.