

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST
JUNE 14, 2009

HOMILY--MARK 14:12-16, 22-26

It is a wonderful experience to receive an invitation to a celebration, to be honored as a guest at a special banquet.

Today we are invited to celebrate the feast of Body and Blood of Christ. Through our baptism we have been chosen as guests. When this celebration was established by the Church, the Pope asked the great Dominican theologian, Thomas Aquinas, to write the text for the liturgy. One of the prayers that Thomas wrote begins very simply: "O sacred banquet in which Christ becomes our food. . ."

Through our baptism we receive an extraordinary invitation to the Eucharistic banquet. Who invites us? Christ himself. What does Christ offer us? Himself--his own Body and His own Blood. At the Eucharistic table Christ becomes our food. This is the mystery of faith.

Our mind cannot grasp the mystery of Christ present in this banquet under the signs of bread and wine. We believe in the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ because we have first received the gift of faith. Thomas Aquinas expresses this truth in poetic verses:

*Sight has failed, nor thought conceives,
But a dauntless faith believes,
Resting on a pow'r divine.
Here beneath these signs are hidden
Priceless things to sense forbidden.*

The Dominican, Catherine of Siena, teaches us this mystery of faith through the words that God the Father spoke to her in mystical prayer:

What tastes and sees and touches this sacrament? The soul's sensitivity. How does she see it? With her mind's eye, so long as it has the pupil of holy faith. This eye sees in that whiteness the divine nature joined with the human; wholly God and wholly human; the body, soul, and blood of Christ, his soul united with his body and his body and soul united with my divine nature. . . .(Dialogue, p 210).

To celebrate this "sacred banquet in which Christ becomes our food" is to experience the unity of Christ's body. Jesus invites everyone to the table. In Jesus the guests at the sacred meal become one. Contemporary music for the Eucharistic liturgy, sings forth how God's people are made one when they gather to celebrate the sacred banquet:

- ❖ One bread, one body, one Lord of all, one cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord. (*One Bread, One Body*)

- ❖ We come as your people, we come as your own, united with each other, love finds a home. (*Song of the Body of Christ*)
- ❖ Do not one cup, one loaf, declare our oneness in the Lord. . . . (*Gift of Finest Wheat*)

While our experience of attending banquets is usually reserved to special occasions, there is another incredible gift that Jesus gives to us in his sacred banquet: Jesus invites us to eat his bread and drink his blood every day. Just as we rely for daily food--our daily bread-- to sustain our physical health, Jesus offers us himself every day. At each Eucharist we hear Jesus' say: "Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body. . . Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood." Every day the invitation is renewed: Eat my body, drink my blood. We are transformed. We are changed. How did Catherine of Siena describe the effect of this food?

Contemplate the marvelous state of the soul who receives this bread of life, this food of angels, as she ought. When she receives this sacrament she lives in me and I in her. Just as the fish is in the sea and the sea in the fish, so am I in the soul and soul in me, the sea of peace. Grace lives in such a soul because, having received this bread of life in grace, she lives in grace. Dialogue, p 211.

Today we celebrate the Body and Blood of Christ. It is a day to remember what a great gift Jesus has given to us. Jesus has gifted us with an invitation to his sacred banquet to eat his body and drink his blood. Jesus gives us his life! He transforms us: Jesus lives in us and we live in Jesus! Is there a greater gift? Is there any sign of greater love?

--Sister Mary Catherine Antczak, O.P.