

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

June 10, 2007

Gn 14:18-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Lk 9:11b-17

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Every year in the United States we celebrate a great holiday that we call Memorial Day. Citizens gather in all the cities and towns across the country to honor and remember our heroes in solemn ceremonies and services. We Catholics cherish a great memorial of our own.

On the night before he died Jesus met with his disciples and called upon them to carry out a ceremony of eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of him. He prepared his own memorial celebration. Just hours before he was arrested he created the liturgical service that would unite, strengthen, and nourish his followers to the end of time. As St. Paul says "For us often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes."

Through much of his public life he was no doubt planning the rhythm and life of the community of disciples that we call Church. He drew upon all the richness of Jewish religious practice and memory. Beginning with the sacrifice of bread and wine of Melchizedek in the days of Abraham, the Passion feast in Egypt, the blood of the Lamb on the doorpost, the manna in the desert and His blood of the covenant offered by Moses on Sinai, he pulled all these memories together as he prepared the sacrifice that would memorialize for all time his death on the cross. Jesus found a way to be with his disciples as a source of hope and healing in their darkest hours and joy and thanksgiving in their times of transforming growth and celebration. The Eucharist is both sacrifice and memorial. As the Christian community gathers Sunday after Sunday they cannot help but remember how he loved us to the end and that love found a way to be with us, to transform us, to heal us and bring us his own trust in the Father. So on this the feast of Corpus Christi we Catholics celebrate and memorialize the miracle of the Eucharist -- that Jesus so loved us that he became our food and drink, that he entered into us, that we might have his Spirit. It is through this Holy Spirit dwelling in us that Christ is made present in this sinful old world of ours. It is this Spirit that will renew the face of the earth. So we the modern day disciples of this Lord assemble to received the gift of Jesus himself that will transform us and prepare us to be sent forth to release the power of his love in our cities and towns. Let us open ourselves to remember, to celebrate and to become his transforming presence in a world that longs for heroes that bring peace. In the midst of this world where violence and oppression seem to dominate ever new summary on the feast of Corpus Christi we continue to place our love and trust in the continually presence of Christ among us.