



From the Desk of Father Peter

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ



Jesus gave us his Body and Blood in the Eucharist we honor today. In 1263, a German priest named Peter of Prague was troubled by doubts he had about the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

He decided to make a pilgrimage to Rome and pray for guidance in his troubles along the way. On the way to Rome, he came to a small town in central Italy called Bolsena. While celebrating Mass there something amazing happened. As the priest held the host and said the words of consecration, blood started to seep out of the host onto the linen cloth on the altar, that we call the corporal

He soon asked to be taken to the nearby city of Orvieto where he knew Pope Urban IV was staying. The Pope had the incident investigated and no natural explanation could be found for it. Pope Urban had the blood stained host and corporal put in the Cathedral in Orvieto. The corporal is still there today to be revered by the faithful.

Today's Alleluia verse is a powerful statement of the theme of this solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. Taken from the chapter of John's Gospel 6:51, listen to it again: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord; whoever eats this bread will live forever."

It is not easy for today's generation of people to understand the ancient significance of bread. It used to be known as the "staff of life," meaning that it was the main support of human life. So, the question arises for modern believers: Why did Jesus choose bread

and wine for the sacrament? It was because, in biblical times, bread, along with fish (usually cooked in olive oil) and grape wine, was the regular diet of the ordinary people. It meant life to the ancient people and Scriptures say as much. When our first parents were expelled from the garden of Eden, it was in these terms: "By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat." Gen 3:19. When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he taught them to ask for their earthly needs in terms of bread: "Give us today our daily bread." Mt 6:11. In his desert confrontation with Satan trying to tempt him, Jesus said, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Mt 4:4. Jesus chose the most common food of his time for the Eucharist to show that just as the body needs food in order to live, so the soul needs the nourishment of this sacrament.

A second question arises when we consider the Eucharist: What did Jesus mean when he spoke those sacred words? Listen to the words from today's Gospel: "This is my body...this is my blood of the covenant..." These are plain assertions by a man who is about to die. People about to die do not speak in riddles. Or, listen again to the Alleluia verse: I am the living bread. Four of those five words have only one syllable. This is plain language. This is why the Church does not substitute canned grape juice for wine or dispose irreverently the elements of communion which are unused in the celebration of the Mass. That might be permissible if Jesus, our Lord did not really mean what he said, if bread and wine were merely symbols. There is only one conclusion: He meant what he said. He, himself, is our food under the forms of bread and wine. We are called as Catholics to, therefore, be reverent when we come to receive the Holy Eucharist and the Precious Blood. Men and women throughout the ages have died to preserve and protect it.

Our final question is: Of what importance is this to us? The answer is that this sacrament is necessary for spiritual living. It forgives sins and gives us spiritual strength and health. Just as we need three meals a day to be healthy and to work, so we need this sacrament regularly to be alive and well in Spirit. Remember that the results are guaranteed, for Jesus assures us, whoever eats this bread will live forever.

Therefore, we celebrate this day the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist gratefully and joyfully adored. "O sacrament most holy, O sacrament divine, all praise and thanksgiving be every moment Thine!"



Peace and love to all,

Fr. Peter Enyan-Boadu