

BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST – YEAR C (Homily 02)

“The Eucharist as Babet’s Feast”

(Gen 14:18-20; Psalm 110; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Luke 9:11b-17)

\*\*\*\*\*

Do you realize that we are living the readings even as we celebrate this Eucharist today?

Believe in Jesus and live the Eucharistic mystery.

The Gospel today, along with the other readings, is actually an outline of the Eucharist, which is made up of two distinct parts – the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

In the Gospel we are first presented with the Liturgy of the Word. It begins “Jesus spoke to the crowds about the Kingdom of God.”

The Kingdom of God was Jesus’ favourite topic, and should be for every minister of the Gospel. The fact that in this episode he fed the multitudes in the wilderness casts Jesus as the new Moses. There is something drastically new happening here – a new creation, a new world order. The teachings of Jesus and his presence are inaugurating a new way of being in the world.

The readings in this Liturgy of the Word add other elements that spell this newness out, such as liberation and healing. Jesus can also be seen as the new King Melchizedek who blessed God for delivering Abram from his enemies. The reign of God is all about deliverance and freedom from the negative influence of in the world.

The Gospel in its turn tells us that Jesus healed all those that needed to be cured. Healing is an integral part of this new kingdom. I would suggest today that it is not so much physical healing as it was then, as inner healing of our defects of character, our shortcomings, our sinfulness that makes us sin. He has truly come to set us free, free especially from our addictions.

So the first part of our liturgy today, our Liturgy of the Word, is all about the reign of God at work in our lives through healing and liberation. Let us turn now to the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

In the gospel we see Jesus surprising the disciples by placing the onus on them to

feed the multitudes. The first thing they point out is their meagre and inadequate resources that they have on hand. That doesn't bother Jesus. He simply blesses those meagre resources and feeds thousands, with some left over.

The twelve baskets left over are significant. This miracle of the loaves, which some claim may be a miracle of sharing, took place in Jewish territory. The number twelve suggests that Jesus and his new reign replace the old covenant God made with Moses, a covenant that was never really functional. The Chosen people were never faithful to that covenant based on Law, and had actually, through a corrupt leadership, made it into a self-serving religion for especially the scribes and the Pharisees.

Jesus' new reign of God's love and compassion would finally be totally acceptable to God and truly meet the deepest needs of the human heart. It is Jesus and Jesus alone who shows us the way to true fidelity to God. And it is through the Eucharist that we find the fullest expression of that fidelity, as it makes present for us the same trust in God and love for humanity that Jesus showed on the Cross.

The first reading adds the element of mystery here. Melchizedek appears out of nowhere as a mysterious figure, bearing mysterious gifts of bread and wine for a ceremony that blesses God and bestows God's blessing on Abram. Certainly he prefigures Jesus as Shepherd-King and giver of the Eucharist.

At its core the Eucharist is a mystery that we will never fully understand. All we can do is believe that in some mysterious way, through the power of the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, these humble gifts of bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. Even more, we believe that we who listen to His Word and receive his Body and Blood, are in turn transformed into His Body, sent out to serve the world, to bring healing and liberation to it, as he did.

*Babet's Feast*, a foreign movie set in a Danish village, speaks to this Eucharistic mystery as Word and Sacrament in a poetic way. The villagers in the movie are good people, living in their comfort zone, a tiny world of laws and pettiness and preoccupations and narrow views. Babet is a French woman who suffered greatly. Her family was killed in the war and she runs away to Denmark. There she offers to be a cook for lodging and cooks soup and codfish everyday. She wins a lottery and decides to throw a party, a French dinner. The villagers meet to see if they even want it, and finally decide to let her do it. They try to limit their enjoyment of the whole thing out of a sense of propriety. A general attends who has seen the

larger world. He gives a talk at the end of a sumptuous feast they could never have imagined.

The general was prosperous, but was not that happy, though he hid that thorn in his side. He was a good, moral person, but at times he wondered if the world was not a moral concern, but a mystical concern. The participants became mellow and start to really enjoy the banquet. At one point the general stands up and quotes Psalm 85:11 “mercy and truth have met; righteousness and bliss have kissed.” These are supposed to be opposites, he continues, but they have overcome their opposites and it is one world made safe by God’s love. Humans are frail and foolish; we have been told that grace is to be found, but we imagined that divine grace is finite, and for this reason, we tremble. Never till that moment had he admitted that he trembled.

The moment comes when our eyes are opened and we realize that grace is infinite and demands nothing from us. We will await it with confidence and acknowledge it in gratitude. If we are grateful, we are doing it right. When we lose gratitude and move into cynicism, comparing and competition, we have lost grace and are doing it wrong.

Grace makes no conditions, and singles out none of us in particular. Grace takes us all to its bosom, proclaims general amnesty, that which we have chosen is given to us in grace, and even those things that we have rejected and refused, are also given to us at the same time. That which we have rejected is now poured out upon us abundantly.

Under the influence of these words, the people now forgive one another. They knew that the room was filled with heavenly light, and all were transformed. No one thought about their own merit; they just knew that grace had been given to them that night. They had seen the universe finally as it really is. They had been given one hour of the millennium.

In the Eucharist we are given an hour of the millennium, through Word and Sacrament, and now it is all about confidence and gratitude. It is all about confidence and trusting in God’s goodness. That is called faith in God, that God would be that good to do this for the world. Then we will live the rest of our lives in gratitude. If the bible does not lead us to that, then we have not read the bible.

So today, on this feast of Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of Jesus, let us put our faith in the Eucharist and seek to live this mystery by loving others as God in

Jesus has loved us.