

HOMILY CORPUS CHRISTI SUNDAY - C
“Living the Eucharist”
(Gen 14:18-20; Psalm 110; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Luke 9:11b-17)

In the state of Georgia is the famous Forest Lawn memorial garden. In it is a huge marble carving of the Last Supper. Twenty feet long and seven feet high, it is carved out of a 60-ton block of white marble. It shows Jesus and the twelve apostles life-size. The sculptor carved details such as fingernails, and food on the table. It took him three years to carve out this memorial to the Holy Thursday event.

Would you prefer to admire art, or be a work of art?

The best way to remember the Last Supper is to live it in our lives each day.

As impressive as that Forest Lawn statue of the Last Supper must be, it falls far short of the real thing, the Eucharist that we are called not just to admire, but to live. It serves to remind us of what Jesus did, but still is only a static work of art. We are to be God’s living masterpieces, God’s works of art by living out the Eucharist in our lives.

For St. Paul, and also for Henri Nouwen, a renowned spiritual writer, “remembering” is a very dynamic activity. It is far from static. Remembering the past, makes the past real in the present, and releases a power capable of carrying us into the future.

The most radical act imaginable is to give one’s life over to others. Jesus’ words as he breaks the bread and blesses the cup indicate his willing acceptance of what lies ahead, and a complete giving of self. It is as if he lays no claim to his personhood, but has given himself to his followers - and by extension, to the world - in a total act of self-giving. Nothing is held back, not even his life’s blood. He is completely and utterly at the disposal of all. The catch is that he instructs us to remember him by doing likewise - not simply in breaking bread and sharing the cup, but in a self-giving modelled on his.

Each time we celebrate the Eucharist, then, we are agreeing to more than just remembering Jesus. We are, in fact, participating in his covenant with our own bodies, our own blood. For his sake, we are agreeing to offer ourselves for the life of the world. For his sake, we are committing ourselves to a self-emptying so profound that it is *his* life that fills us, works through us and gives us life. The Eucharist is not just a one-sided gift to comfort and strengthen us, but a challenge to become Christ for the world, bread that is broken for the world.

The communion we share must be lived out, not just remembered. We must become the Body of Christ. That means becoming one body, and being broken for others. Being one body means being reconciled with all others and trying to live in harmony and unity and peace with our fellow human beings. Letting ourselves be broken means apologizing, forgiving, and giving ourselves in service, seeking to do good for others without counting the cost or seeking gain.

This is the only miracle story that is common to all four gospels, underlining its importance to the four evangelists. The feeding of the multitude is a sign that the kingdom of God is present in Jesus. The one who feeds the hungry is the one who fulfills the exodus hopes of Israel, the words of Isaiah that announce good news for the poor, and Jesus' teachings on the kingdom.

The Jewish people were chosen to be a model of God's plan for the world – union with God and one another. However, they failed because of their desire for possession, prestige and power like all the other nations, not to mention their dependence on their own narrow notion of holiness and purity, that separated them from others and created divisions among them. Jesus came into that society to establish the kingdom of God anew - a kingdom of compassion and justice in life-giving relationships. And that is what we are called to do everyday – be transformed into love, into compassion and justice. And that is what this Eucharist symbolizes and does for us – if we celebrate it with faith.

May our sharing in this communion today help us become one Body, one Spirit, and empower us to give ourselves in service to others so that we might truly live out the memorial we celebrate today. May God bless us all.