

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:1,2,4; 1 Corinthians 11:23:26; Sequence: Lauda Sion; Luke 9:11b-17

Dear family and friends of the Co-Cathedral of St. Theresa Church,

Today is the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ and the kick-off of the Eucharistic Revival!

Some of you may have a bucket list of the names of places that you want to visit. The reasons for this desire to visit could be: to relax, unwind and enjoy, or to fulfill one's dream and find happiness. But do you ever wish you could visit heaven?

When we think of heaven, often it means it would be the end of everything here on earth, which is true. But as baptized Christians, we know it is where our citizenship is, which we prepare ourselves and hope to enter after our earthly life. Remember one of the discourses of Jesus during the Last Supper with his disciples; he called heaven his Father's house with many dwelling places and prepared the way so that we will be with him in his Father's house (cf. John 14:2-4).

Do you wish you could visit there for a moment?

Do you understand that the Holy Mass is a visit of "heaven on earth"? Whenever we come to celebrate the Holy Mass, we have the foretaste of heaven. You don't have to spend much on travel, food, or hotel. God does not charge you for a visit! He wants you and your family to come and relish the gift that he offered while we are still on our pilgrim way. Prophet Isaiah described this when he said, "All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, buy grain and eat; Come, buy grain without money, wine and milk without cost! (Is. 55:1). It is part of God's plan to provide us with the place where heaven and earth meet! Dr. Scott Hahn pointed this out in his reflections on today's liturgical readings: "at the dawn of salvation history, God revealed our future in figures." In our first reading, we see the figure of Melchizedek, a priest-king who comes from Jerusalem. He is offering bread and wine to celebrate the victory of God's beloved servant, Abram, over his foes. It bestows God's blessings on Abram. It is a figure of how one day we will receive God's blessings and, in turn, "bless God." His action shows how we will thank God for delivering us from our enemies, sin, and death.

The Holy Eucharist is the tangible realization of the figures mentioned in the Old Testament, which St. Paul recalls in today's Epistle -- Jesus transformed the sign of bread and wine, making it a sign of His body and blood, through which God bestows upon us the blessings of His new covenant (cf 1 Cor 11-23-26). We are gifted with an opportunity to recall, celebrate, and realize the joyful liturgy of heaven to participate in Jesus' divine liturgy and sacrifice through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

By the way, we don't just visit heaven as if we are tourists or visitors. We are destined to be the "kama'aina" of heaven! In his poetic sequence for the Mass of Corpus Christi, St. Thomas cries out, "O Jesus, Bread of Angels, make us see your Good in the land of the living. You who feed us here, make us there (heaven) the intimate companions of the saints." He is expressing the truth that we are celebrating our communion with the saints, that we become part of that great multitude that cries out, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev. 7:10); and joining the heavenly hosts in singing "Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of hosts. Hosanna in the highest!"

Sharing in the joys of heaven and becoming "companions of the saints" are graces the Lord bestows on us even now through the Holy Eucharist. In this most precious sacrament, the Lord gives us Himself as a "foretaste" of the eternal joys of heaven and unites us with the faithful here on earth and those in heaven. Isn't it, he said, "so that where I am you also may be" (John 14:4). Our patron St. Therese was deeply touched by this truth. She wrote in her diary her beautiful experience of her first Holy Communion. She said, "Wasn't Heaven itself in my

soul?" Yes. And because her saintly mother surely was in heaven, she said, "In receiving Jesus' visit, I also received Mamma's. She blessed me and rejoiced at my happiness."

What a profound truth of our faith! What a consolation for us! When we devoutly receive the Lord in the Holy Eucharist, we are brought into a close union with him and our loved ones who have died and come to us united to our beloved Lord Jesus. Hence, the Holy Eucharist is a Sacrament of Unity. We glimpse this unity through the miraculous feeding of the multitude in our gospel today (cf Lk 9:11b-17).

But how can this simple white thin bread, so small and delicate that you can't even see from a distance, be the source of unity?

Because it is Jesus himself hidden from our senses, under the appearance of bread and wine, he is hidden in this simple and humble appearance, which turns into his Body and Blood during the consecration. More often than not, God reveals himself not in thunderous lighting or grandiosity but in a small voice or innocent appearance to draw faith in us (cf. 1 King 19:11-12). Indeed, his presence in the Holy Eucharist is not something we can know by our senses but only by the gift of faith (cf. CCC #1381). Remember when Jesus said, "I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world (Jn 6:48-51), those who didn't believe him walked away and left his company, but the disciples remained. St. Cyril of Jerusalem said, "Do not doubt whether this is true, but rather receive the words of the Savior in faith, for since he is the truth, he cannot lie."

It is our Lord Jesus whom we received, and we are all witnesses of the visit of heaven among us! Would you allow yourself to miss this visit?

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor