

# Scripture Study

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood (Corpus Christi) – Cycle A



## Opening prayer

Deuteronomy 8:2-3,14b-16a (Ps 147:12-15,19-20) 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 **John 6:51-58**

## Overview of the Gospel:

- On the heels of his miracle of the feeding of the 5000 (John 6:1-15), Jesus delivers his “bread of life” discourse in the synagogue at the seaside village of Capernaum (verse 59). The time is Passover (verse 4), one year before his Passion, death, and Resurrection.
- In the first part of the discourse (verses 35-47), Jesus invites his listeners to have faith in him. Their main objections at this point are his claim to have come down from heaven (verses 33, 41-42) and his claim to be able to raise them on the last day (verse 35)—something he could only do if he were God.
- The second part of his address (verses 48-58) consists of an invitation to the Eucharist, the partaking of his body and blood. His hearers are revolted by the idea, understanding him—correctly—as speaking literally (this is evident by their reactions in verses 52, 60, 66). Later, some of these hearers—including many of his disciples (verses 60, 66), including Judas (verses 64-65, 70-71)—“no longer accompanied him” because of this teaching. Only those who trusted in him completely, though as bewildered as the others, stayed with him (verses 67-69).

## Questions:

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading, what was the reason God gave the manna to the Israelites as they wandered through the wilderness for 40 years? What does he say their response should be?
- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, St. Paul is warning the Corinthians not to mix the Eucharist and pagan sacrifices (verses 1-15). What does this say about the Eucharist? About those that receive it?
- In the Gospel Reading, who is Jesus speaking to? What great miracle has he just performed? Where does this discourse take place (verse 59)? What does he say about the city in which he is speaking (Matthew 11:22ff) and how they received his message?
- What are the blessings of following Jesus’ commands to eat his flesh and drink his blood (verses 51, 54, 56-58)? What is the consequence for those who don’t (verse 53)? According to Jesus’ promise in this passage, when does eternal life begin if you eat his flesh?
- What happens if the Flesh and Blood of Christ is received unworthily (1 Corinthians 11:27-30; CCC 1385)? What should be our attitude when we partake of the Eucharist?
- How often do you go to Communion? What is your experience of God’s life when you do? If you are unable to receive Communion at this time, how important is it for you work towards that goal? What will be lacking in your spiritual life if you don’t?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 787, 2837, 1322-1419**

## Closing prayer

*God in his omnipotence could not give more, in His wisdom He knew not how to give more, in His riches He had not more to give, than the Eucharist. -St. Augustine*

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!**

# "He who eats this bread will live forever"

**Scripture:** *John 6:51-58*

**Meditation:** Why did Jesus offer himself as “food and drink”? The Jews were scandalized and the disciples were divided when Jesus said *“unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you.”* What a hard saying, unless you understand who Jesus is and why he calls himself the *bread of life*. The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves (John 6:3-13), when Jesus said the blessing, broke and distributed the loaves through his disciples to feed the multitude, is a sign that prefigured the superabundance of the unique bread of the Eucharist, or Lord’s Supper. The Gospel of John has no account of the Last Supper meal (just the foot washing ceremony and Jesus’ farewell discourse). Instead, John quotes extensively from Jesus’ teaching on the bread of life.

In the Old Covenant bread and wine were offered in a thanksgiving sacrifice as a sign of grateful acknowledgment to the Creator as the giver and sustainer of life. Melchizedek, who was both a priest and king (Genesis 14:18; Hebrews 7:1-4), offered a sacrifice of bread and wine. His offering prefigured the offering made by Jesus, our high priest and king (Hebrews 7:26; 9:11; 10:12). The remembrance of the manna in the wilderness recalled to the people of Israel that they live – not by earthly bread alone – but by the bread of the Word of God



(Deuteronomy 8:3). At the last supper when Jesus blessed the cup of wine, he gave it to his disciples saying, *“Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”* (Matthew 26:28). Jesus was pointing to the sacrifice he was about to make on the cross, when he would shed his blood for us – thus pouring himself out and giving himself to us – as an atoning sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the world. His death on the cross fulfilled the sacrifice of the paschal (passover) lamb whose blood spared the Israelites from death in Egypt. Paul the Apostle tells us that “Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Paul echoes the words of John the Baptist who called Jesus the *“Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”* (John 1:29). Jesus made himself an

offering and sacrifice, a gift that was truly pleasing to the Father. He *“offered himself without blemish to God”* (Hebrews 9:14) and *“gave himself as a sacrifice to God”* (Ephesians 5:2).

Jesus chose the time of the Jewish Feast of Passover to fulfill what he had announced at Capernaum – giving his disciples his body and his blood as the true bread of heaven. Jesus’ passing over to his Father by his death and resurrection – the new Passover – is anticipated in the Last Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the church in the glory of God’s kingdom. When the Lord Jesus commands his disciples to eat his flesh and drink his blood, he invites us to take his life into the very center of our being. That life which he offers is the very life of God himself. Do you hunger for the *bread of life*?

*“Lord Jesus, you nourish and sustain us with your very own presence and life-giving word. You are the bread of life – the heavenly food that sustains us now and that produces everlasting life within us. May I always hunger for you and be satisfied in you alone.”*

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