

**21<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – B; Aug. 25<sup>th</sup> 2024**  
**Joshua 24:1-2, 15-17, 18; Ephesians 5:2a, 25-32; John 6:60-69**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

We have just listened to the last part of the Eucharistic Discourse of Jesus which we started four weeks ago. All throughout the Discourse the controversies and confusions enveloped it. Humanly speaking, finally it met with a tragic end, as all people, except the 12 men left Jesus.

Many Christian denominations hold it firm that we should take the teachings of Jesus in the gospels literally. But coming to the Eucharistic Discourse of Jesus they change their stand and teach that we should not take the words of Jesus in the Eucharistic Discourse literally. Some say that Jesus speaks in figurative language. Others hold the view that the presence of Jesus in the form of bread and wine is merely symbolic. But Catholic Church is very stern in her teaching that the Eucharistic Discourse of Jesus should be taken literally as there is no figurative language in Jesus' sayings. For instance, in the parables Jesus always use figurative language and comparisons. He says, "The Kingdom of God **is like a** mustard seed; the Kingdom of God is **like a treasure** buried in a field. The Kingdom of God is **like a net** thrown in the sea." Here Jesus does not say that the Kingdom of God is mustard seed or the treasure buried in the field or a net thrown in the sea. But in the Eucharistic Discourse Jesus does not use any sort of metaphors; rather he is very plain and straight forward. He does not say that '**I am like** the bread and wine;' rather he says repeatedly, "**I am the living bread; I am the bread of life.**" And at the Last Supper he says to his disciples, "**This is my Body; this is my Blood.**" He does not say, "**This is like my Body or this is like my Blood.**"

If Jesus had meant a symbolic presence, definitely, when the crowd was leaving him with the comment, "**This saying is hard; who can accept it?**" he could have said to the crowd, "*I didn't mean that you should eat my flesh and drink my blood.*" But he remained firm in what he said and didn't stop anyone from leaving him. He even asked his Twelve, "**Do you also want to leave?**" **Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."** So Peter and companions didn't have any doubt to accept the teaching of Jesus on the Bread of life.

**In the entire Discourse, Jesus so often uses the terms, my body and blood, my flesh and blood. But this does not mean that only a piece of his flesh and some of his blood we receive in Communion; rather he means the entire person.** Please listen to the words of Jesus, "*Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the*

*Father, so also the one who feeds on ME will have life because of me.*” Here Jesus uses the term ‘*me.*’ Flesh and blood is a phrase which means the whole person of Jesus.

Martin Luther, who led the Protestant Reformation, believed in the Eucharist. But he argued against the **Transubstantiation doctrine of Catholic Church and developed the theory of Consubstantiation.** According to Luther, at the time when the priest pronounces the Consecration words, *Christ comes down and simply remains in the bread and wine or simply co-exists with the species.* So Christ uses the bread and wine as seats or objects to stay in. In other words, Jesus simply sits in the consecrated bread. As Luther argues, there is no **change in the substance and accidents of the bread and wine.** It seems to be easy to comprehend. And also the Lutherans deny the continuous presence of Christ in the Eucharist; rather, once the Eucharistic service is over, Christ leaves the bread and wine as the people leave the Church and the species remain as they are. So the Eucharist is not preserved at all.

Against this erroneous teaching of Luther the *Council of Trent* which was held between 1545 –1563 came out in defense and repeated the doctrine of **‘Transubstantiation’ defined by the Fourth Council of Lateran in 1215.** According to the doctrine of *Transubstantiation* what Jesus took in to his holy hands at the Last Supper were the simple wheat bread and grape wine. **But after giving thanks and blessing they became his Body and Blood. For he said, “This is my Body, this is my Blood.” Bread and wine were consequently changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.** Here Jesus is not hiding or sitting in the bread and wine; **rather the very substance of the bread and wine is changed. Remember, it is the substance that makes a particular material what it is.** So once the substance of the wheat and wine is changed, they are no more wheat or wine. But the change took place only in regard to the **substance of the bread and wine; the appearance (also called the species and accidents) of the bread and wine, we mean, what we perceive by sense, i.e. color, smell, shape and taste remain the same.** That is why when we taste the Consecrated Bread, it tastes the same like the unconsecrated bread and wine. This conversion happens miraculously by the power of the Holy Spirit. **So the Catholics should not say that Jesus is present in the bread or host and wine; rather the bread and wine are converted to the body and blood of Christ.**

In the Eucharistic Discourse Jesus did not reveal as how he was going to give his Body and Blood to his disciples. But at the Last Supper using the bread and wine he made it clear to us the method he would be using to feed us.