

MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST; Cycle – C; June 19th 2022
Genesis 14:18-20; 1Corinthians. 11: 23-26; Luke 9: 11-17

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Easter Season is filled with the celebrations of great Mysteries. On Easter Sunday we celebrated the Mystery of the Resurrection; forty days later we celebrated the Mystery of the Ascension of the Lord; then followed by that we had the Pentecost and Holy Trinity Sunday. Finally we are concluding the season of celebrations with the great Mystery of the Eucharist, which is traditionally known as Corpus Christi. When we remember the Eucharist we also take the Body and Blood of Jesus together with the Eucharistic celebration, the Mass.

Catholic Church teaches that the seven Sacraments were instituted by Jesus, in the sense that they have direct or indirect connection with Jesus and his mission. Among the Sacraments, **the Eucharist is known to be the crown of other Sacraments.** The reason is that, at the worthy reception of every Sacrament we receive the grace from Jesus. But when we receive the Eucharist worthily, **not only we receive the grace but the giver of grace, Jesus himself.** *In order to get a full understanding of the Eucharist we have to go to the accounts of the synoptic gospels which speak about the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus at the Last Supper and also together with that we need to take the Eucharistic discourse of Jesus in John chapter 6: 41-61 and also the short account of Paul in 1 Cor. 11: 23-26 which we have just heard.*

From the very first century onwards the Eucharist remained the center and the very life of the early Christians, and it gave and gives spiritual power to those who believe in it. The celebrations of the Christological Events like Christmas and Easter started in the Church after the apostolic time. The only celebration which was begun by the Apostles was the Eucharist. At the Last Supper Jesus converted bread and wine into his Body and Blood and asked his disciples to eat and drink them. Then, according to Luke Jesus gave them the command, **“Do this in memory of me.” (Lk. 22: 19b).** It was clear to the disciples that this great mystery should be continued in the community. So as soon as the disciples started a community life they celebrated the Eucharist as part of their weekly gathering which took place on the first day of the week.

Of course, we don't see the word Eucharist or Mass used anywhere in the early history of the Church. But if we go through the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles we have reference to the Eucharistic celebration there. **In Acts 3: 42 we read, “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the**

breaking of the bread and to the prayers.” *The breaking of the bread mentioned here was nothing but the Eucharistic celebration of the first community.*

Today’s second reading from 1 Cor. 11: 23-26 we have the short account of the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus, which is more or less the repetition of the account in the Synoptic gospels. But Paul’s writing is important for the Biblical historians as it is *the first written account on the institution of the Eucharist*. Long before the first gospel was written by Mark, Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians instructing them about the importance of the Eucharist. According to John chapter 6 the feeding of the five thousand men is the pre-figuration of the Eucharistic meal Jesus will give to millions of believers in future. For this very reason, in today’s gospel we have just listened to the feeding of the 5000 in Luke. When we go through the discourse of Jesus in John we know very clearly that the source of our eternal life is the Eucharist. Jesus says, **“Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.”** Jesus instituted the Eucharist to remain with us till the end of the world. Jesus says, **“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.”** *In short, it is very evident that unless we eat and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus we will not have eternal life.*

From the discourse of Jesus it is very clear that at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we are not approaching the ordinary bread and wine; but the very source of our eternal life. If we continue reading the 1Cor 11: 27 ff. we see St. Paul warning the careless Corinthians who approached the Body and Blood of Jesus in sinful state. Paul says, **“Therefore whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a considerable number are dying.”**

It is very unfortunate that in the modern age people approach and receive the Body and Blood of Jesus unworthily, that is, living in grave sins. Some think that by the very fact that they are Catholics they are eligible to receive the Holy Communion, no matter, how often they come to the Church and how serious they are about their faith. Every time before we receive the Holy Eucharist, we need to examine ourselves and see in what state of life we are in. If we are in grave sins, it is better we abstain from the Communion and go for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which is the wonderful Sacrament of healing and purification.