

June 7, 2015

Readings: Exodus 24:3-8; Hebrews 9:11-15; John 6:51-58

Today, we celebrate a great solemnity in the Church in honor of the Holy Eucharist. We owe a great debt of gratitude to those many theologians over the centuries who have contributed to the Church’s fuller understanding of this sacrament. But it remains equally true that for many people the central truth of the Eucharist is more accessible, not through theological terms, but through the burning fire of love that the Eucharist has enflamed in our hearts.

We are told in the Letter to the Hebrews that Christ entered once for all into the sanctuary by means of his own blood, shed for our sins. He deigned to enter into our world to save and set us free and to even enter into our bodies through the sacramental graces of the Holy Eucharist. He desires to transform us into His likeness by entering into the very depths of our being. He is not hoarding His divinity, but sharing it by means of sharing his humanity with us.

I recall a homily delivered several years ago by then Pope Benedict XVI in which he cited a phrase that struck a chord in my heart. Centuries earlier, his predecessor St. Leo the Great had said: ‘our participation in the Body and Blood of Christ does not tend towards anything else than we become that which we receive.’ “If this is true for every Christian, it is to an even greater degree for us priests. This is our constant desire and commitment.”¹

He continued: “The temptation is always strong to reduce prayer to superficial and hurried moments, to giving in to being overwhelmed from activity and from earthly preoccupations.” How true it is, whether we are preoccupied with good things, such as preparing for

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, Corpus Christi 2009, referencing St. Leo the Great, *Sermo 12, De Passione* 3,7, PL 54

a centennial exhibit honoring marriage, attending Open Houses for recent graduates, or preoccupied with difficulties, reading the newspaper, worrying about our workplace, or our families. We cannot allow our faith in Jesus Christ to be displaced or shaken.

But if and when our faith is shaken, there is help, and our help is in the name of the Lord, He who made heaven and earth. The Lord wants to quell our doubts, for He desires peace in our hearts. Christ's chosen instrument on earth, the Church, is of divine origin, though composed of weak and sometimes sinful human beings. The more we remain united to the grace of the Eucharist, the more closely our lives will reflect the light of Christ.

God is also a God of justice and His designs will not be altered, even through human failings. The human darkness of sin is illumined by the grace of God; our feeble limbs are fortified through the reception of the Bread of Angels.

Today on this solemnity, we take time to step back, to gaze, to look with wonder and awe, to cast aside our earthly cares, legitimate as they are, so that the Eucharist itself can transform our hearts, permitting a glimpse of the new world, the 'daily bread' of the world to come. Let us be mindful that the future world in heaven is initiated in us here on earth through this 'daily bread.' By the lives we lead, we proclaim our faith each and every day.

If the Eucharist is truly to "change us into what we receive," not only must we recall that we receive Jesus, but our lives must bear witness to that reality. Lord, you humbled yourself and entered once and for all into our sanctuary, the sanctuary of our humanity and our brokenness. Give us this Bread from Heaven today and every day, the living Bread that nourishes us and gives us strength.