

Dear Friends,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. In the Gospel for today's feast Jesus is heard inviting his Jewish listeners to move beyond the limitations of their senses and their capacities to understand. This passage is set within the context of Jesus' having fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. John's Gospel does not have an institutional narrative of the Eucharist, but this entire chapter presents a more developed understanding of what Jesus is offering through the Eucharistic bread, his body.

John's gospel presents Jesus as having made many dramatic "I am" statements - "I am Light", "Living Water", "the Way, the Truth and the Life." In today's passage Jesus is offering himself as the "bread of life" come down from heaven. Jesus is offering "eternal life" to those who would obey his command to eat and live what they receive.

We celebrate the Body and Blood of Christ, then, not just as isolated objects of adoration but as food and drink, like the manna in the desert and the water brought forth from a rock, spoken of in our first reading. Jesus makes it very clear how we are to approach his body and blood: "If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you. He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal."

The food that we eat every day, and the liquids we drink, become part of our bodies sustaining them and allowing them to grow, function, and heal. The food that is the Body and Blood of Christ does something far greater; it makes us one with God. "The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him." This is why the Body and Blood of Christ signify unity and peace: there is one Christ, and all who eat and drink the body and blood of Christ become one in the one Christ. "We, many though we are, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." There is no room for disunity among those who eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ.

Today's feast invites us to enter the land of mystery, the mystery of God's love and God's ways. We are challenged to believe more deeply in Jesus and receive what Jesus is saying about us as individuals and his family. When we say "amen" it is a "yes!" to his presence, and it is a "yes!" to our name, our holiness and our mission. The Christ who came to serve and not to be served, continues his mission in our walking out into the mysteries of our world who needs him, and who needs us to be his Body and Blood as well.

Peace and blessings,
Father John