

Homily by Fr. Cyprian

Corpus Christi

June 6, 2010

Pope Benedict says that feast of the Body and Blood of Christ is the celebration of Holy Thursday in the light of the Resurrection.

Both St. Paul and St. Luke tell about Christians gathering for the breaking of the bread. It is often said that hindsight has 20/20 vision. The evangelists looked back and saw Jesus, His teachings, and the events of His earthly life in the full light of resurrection faith, which His disciples did not have at the time.

Fr. Eugene La Verdere explained to us during a retreat here that St. Luke in his gospel wanted to spell out more fully what mystery of the Eucharist involves. In his gospel, Luke pictures quite often what Our Lord does or teaches during a meal, in order to help us deepen and broaden our understanding of the Lord's Supper.

The first meal comes after Our Lord passed by Levi, sitting at his tax collector's desk and said to him, "Follow me." The religious leaders complained that Jesus was eating and drinking with the tax collectors and sinners. Our Lord replied that those who are well do not need a physician. He came not to call the self-righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Therefore, Christ comes to us in the Eucharist to heal our sinfulness and woundedness.

Later a Pharisee invited Jesus to eat with him. During the meal, a sinful woman of the city came into the room weeping, wetting Jesus' feet with her tears and drying them with her hair. She anointed His feet with precious oil. Simon the Pharisee was scandalized. Our Lord replied that Simon had not washed His feet, nor given Him a kiss of welcome, nor anointed His head with oil. But, this woman has done all of that and more, so her many sins are forgiven, because she has loved much. He told the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Therefore, the Eucharist is a sacrament of faith and a sacrament of love. It is Our Lord's redeeming sacrifice renewed and made present on the altar, as the source of our forgiveness.

Then came the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. A great crowd had gathered. Jesus welcomed them, and taught them many things. Evening came and Our Lord told His disciples to feed them. All they had was a few loaves and fishes. Jesus took them, and looking up to heaven, blessed and broke them, and gave them to His disciples to feed 5000 people.

So, the Eucharist involves teaching-pondering on the Gospel message and Our Lord's words. The one bread and one cup of the Eucharist is multiplied through all lands and all ages. It can satisfy the spiritual hunger of the whole world.

Again, a Pharisee asked Jesus to dine with him. He was astonished that Jesus did not wash before eating. Our Lord said, "Woe to those who cleanse the outside of the cup, but leave the inside full of wickedness. Woe to the lawyers who build tombs for the prophets whom their fathers killed. The blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world will be required of this generation."

Therefore, we must cleanse our interior self in order to share in the Eucharist. Each new generation is burdened with the sins and evil of all earlier generations, but Our Lord Jesus takes away the sins of the whole world in His redeeming sacrifice of Calvary and the Eucharist.

One Sabbath day Christ went to a ruler's house for dinner. A man with dropsy stood before Him. Jesus asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" Our Lord healed him and began teaching, "Which of you, having a son or an ox fall into a pit, will not immediately pull them up on the Sabbath? Take a lower place at a banquet, and your host may say, 'Friend, come higher.' Invite to your feast the poor, the blind, and the crippled. You will be repaid at the resurrection." A dinner guest said, "Blessed is he who will eat bread in the kingdom of God." Our Lord replied with the parable about the many people invited to a great banquet, but who preferred some earthly value, and excused themselves from coming to the feast. The host was angry and said that those invited were not worthy. His servants should go into the highways and byways and bring in the poor, the wretched and the outcasts.

The Eucharist is the banquet of the kingdom of God begun on this earth. Paradoxically the attraction of immediate worldly goods can pull us away from union with God, so that we lose the treasure of sharing in the Eucharist. Yet, Christ in His compassion invites us to return in our poverty and weakness, our loneliness and woundedness, to break bread in the Kingdom of God.

Then there was Zacchaeus, a short tax collector who climbed up a tree to see Jesus. Our Lord said, "Zacchaeus, come down. I must stay at your house today." At the meal Zacchaeus said, "Behold I give half of my goods to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will repay him fourfold." Jesus replied, "Today salvation has come to this house. For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.

The Eucharist is the sacrament of the Good Shepherd.

At the Last Supper, St. Luke clearly shows Our Lord Jesus first sharing in the Old Covenant Passover meal with his disciples and then He celebrates the first Eucharist with them, giving His Body and Blood of the New Covenant to His disciples and telling them to do this in memory of Him.

In the Eucharist Christ is the fulfillment of all God's promises of a Redeemer Savior, of a New Covenant. Each celebration of the Eucharist is a renewal of the New Covenant sacrifice and sacrament of union with God.

Finally St. Luke tells us about the Risen Lord speaking with two disciples on the way to Emmaus who recognize Him in the breaking of bread. Then He appears to the Eleven that Easter Sunday evening saying, "Ought not Christ have suffered these things, and so entered into His glory?"

The Eucharist is also our share in Christ's victory of the Resurrection. We receive Christ crucified and glorified in the Eucharist.

O Sacrament most holy.

O Sacrament divine.

All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine.