



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ
Corpus Christi – June 2, 2024
Reflection by Virginia Jung, OSB

First Reading - Exodus 24: 3-8
Second Reading - Hebrews 9: 11-15
Gospel - Mark 14: 12-16, 22-26

As I was reflecting on these readings for the Feast of The Body and Blood of Christ, these are the passages that stood out to me:

From the book of Exodus, “All that the Lord has said, we will hear and do.”

From Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews, “Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be.”

And two passages from the Gospel of Mark, “Where is my guest room that I might eat the Passover with my disciples?” and “Amen I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.”

My reflections may lead to more questions than answers but we can be certain that this feast celebrates that our God accompanies us in beautiful ways at all times.

In the reading from Exodus, the people of God are, of course, journeying through the wilderness when God once again communicates directly with Moses. This reading describes what follows, a scene that in some ways is very familiar to us: the juxtaposition of the Word of God and a sacrificial offering. The Word represents God’s instruction and the sacrifice seals the agreement between God and the people of God. As that ritual closed, the people agreed, “All that the Lord has said, we will hear and do.” Hear and do – they say they will listen and they will respond, they will follow through.

Even though we have a new covenant with God, here at mass we still hear God’s Word in the Scriptures and we participate in the sacrifice of the Eucharist and we agree to go forward, carrying God’s love and instruction with us.

I believe that idea is even the theme the recessional song today – so we can sing out with gusto when the time comes, aware that we are part of carrying on a very ancient tradition.

From the letter to the Hebrews, Paul emphasized that “Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be.” I feel moved with gratitude for the many good things that have come to be through Jesus and how much that had to do with Eucharist, with the celebration of Corpus Christi today. I was a little disappointed by the note in my study Bible that says: “the majority of later manuscripts here read: ‘the good things to come’”, the good things to come instead of the good things that have come to be.

When we recall that the word Eucharist comes from a Greek word that means thanksgiving, I think that “celebrating the good things that have come to be” is much more in keeping with the spirit of today’s feast. It also reminds us to cultivate a spirit of gratitude rather than a spirit of need. And working from that place of gratitude, to move out of ourselves to contribute love,

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inclusion, prayer, and material assistance in ongoing efforts to satisfy the great needs of our world. God's grace and our own attitude of gratitude provide us with the capacity to do that.

As I said, two passages particularly caught my attention in today's gospel. The first is the idea that the room that Jesus procured for what we think of as the Last Supper and the Institution of the Eucharist, was a "guest room". This brings to mind our Benedictine value of hospitality, which, as we see, flows directly from the marvelous hospitality of Jesus Christ who invites us to partake of his body and blood in the sacrament of the Eucharist and how this binds us together with people throughout the world and even throughout time in the mystical Body of Christ. This marvel, in turn, challenges us to practice the virtue of hospitality, accompanied by the virtue of gratitude-to engage each other in meaningful ways, to resist our compulsive and obsessive behaviors and talk that are real hospitality killers. Instead, we are invited to open ourselves to creativity, curiosity, and joy in our relationships. In his book, *The Whole Language*, Jesuit Father Gregory Boyle calls us as Church to engage in compassionate curiosity. Another way to describe compassionate curiosity is to be intrigued by our world rather than threatened by the world. He is a story teller and brings many examples of compassionate curiosity in action but he says that ultimately, by practicing compassionate curiosity, "We trade in sadness and fear for joy and bravery." That is a good trade, right? Exchange sadness and fear for joy and bravery. I think we sang quite a few songs about that during the recent Easter season but it never hurts to be reminded and to be given a new perspective, another way to think about hospitality: Approach the world and its creatures with compassionate curiosity.

The other gospel passage that causes me to wonder this year on Corpus Christi, is when, at the end of the meal, Jesus said to the disciples: "Amen I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." I approach that statement with reverent curiosity. In a simple way, it is another way that Jesus has of saying goodbye, a statement of farewell. He foresees his death and is aware that this is his last celebration as a human, drinking wine with his friends. It feels though that there is more to it because it echoes aspects of many Scripture passages throughout time. Another aspect of its meaning could be that Jesus is looking forward to the great banquet of the heavenly reunion of God with all peoples at the end of earthly time.

I think my curiosity or wonderment comes from the sense and the teaching I have received that this is already underway, so what does he mean by "that day". Christians have been celebrating the Eucharist as a memorial ever since Jesus said this and we will continue to do so, breaking bread and drinking wine in an act where we believe Jesus to be present. We also believe that the kingdom of God is already underway. We believe it exists in each one of our hearts and that we are actively engaged in bringing it about when we share God's love with each other. And even so, we look forward to "the day" that Jesus names but does not describe. So, I leave this question out there for continued reflection. I encourage each of us to keep questions alive in our hearts and to ponder them, to make time for reflection, to ponder the questions that we have for God and also to make time to listen to the invitations God has for us.