

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

Jesus said to the Jews:

'I am the living bread which has come down from heaven.

Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.'

Then the Jews started arguing with one another: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' they said. Jesus replied:

'I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you.

Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood

has eternal life,

and I shall raise him up on the last day.

For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him.

As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead,

but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Reflections on the Gospel

THE BREAD OF LIFE

The Gospel for today's feast comes from Jesus' long discourse on 'the Bread of Life' in the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to St John. At this final stage of the discourse Jesus explicitly links the gift of the Eucharist with the manna ('bread from heaven') that sustained the Israelites during their time of wandering in the wilderness of Sinai.

For most of the discourse, however, Jesus has been speaking of himself as 'the Bread of Life' in a more general sense. The people want him to emulate Moses, who arranged for 'bread from heaven' (the manna) to be given to their ancestors. But Jesus refuses to be just another figure like Moses, turning on miracles for the people. He identifies the manna with himself. *He* is the life-giving 'Bread' that God has sent down from heaven.

While the original manna simply sustained the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness, the new 'Bread from heaven' sustains life in a far deeper sense. Jesus describes it as 'my flesh for the life of the world' – an allusion to his death, in which he will lay down his earthly life that the world might share the eternal life of God.

As the words of consecration make clear, the Body and Blood of the Lord in the Eucharist are always the body 'given up' for us and the cup 'poured out' for us. In this sacramental mystery believers encounter a divine communication of sacrificial love and life, foreshadowed by but far surpassing what the Israelites experienced at Sinai.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

THE SAVING WORD

THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (CORPUS CHRISTI) / A

14 JUNE 2020

FIRST READING

Deut 8:2-3, 14-16

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy

He gave you food which you and your ancestors did not know.

Moses said to the people: 'Remember how the Lord your God led you for forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, to test you and to know your inmost heart – whether you would keep his commandments or not. He humbled you, he made you feel hunger, he fed you with manna which neither you nor your fathers had known, to make you understand that man does not live on bread alone but that man lives on everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

'Do not then forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery: who guided you through this vast and dreadful wilderness, a land of fiery serpents, scorpions, thirst; who in this waterless place brought you water from the hardest rock; who in this wilderness fed you with manna that your fathers had not known.'

■ The word of the Lord.

RESP PSALM

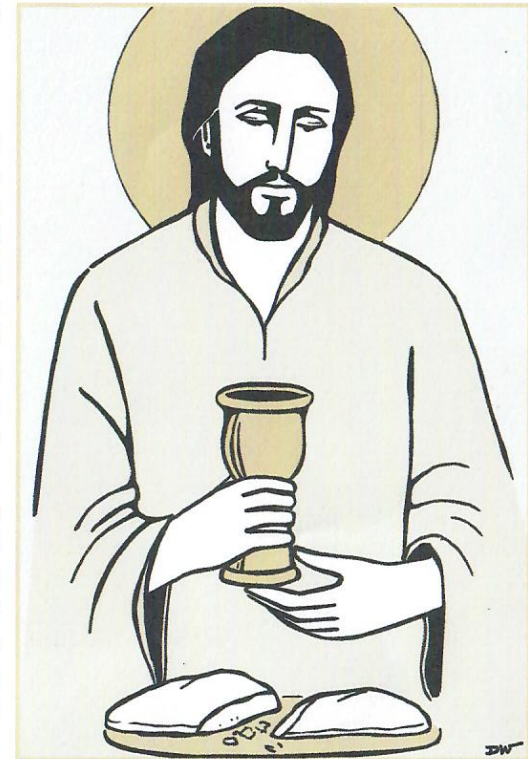
Ps 147:12-15, 19-20. R. v. 12

R. Praise the Lord, Jerusalem. (or Alleluia!)

1. O praise the Lord, Jerusalem! / Zion, praise your God! / He has strengthened the bars of your gates, / he has blessed the children within you. **R.**

2. He established peace on your borders, / he feeds you with finest wheat. / He sends out his word to the earth / and swiftly runs his command. **R.**

3. He makes his word known to Jacob, / to Israel his laws and decrees. / He has not dealt thus with other nations; / he has not taught them his decrees. **R.**



SECOND READING

1 Cor 10:16-17

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

Though we are many, we form a single body because we share this one loaf.

The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ. The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 6:51-52

Alleluia, alleluia! / I am the living bread from heaven, says the Lord; / whoever eats this bread will live for ever. / Alleluia!