

Body and Blood of Christ - Mark 14: 12 – 16, 22 – 26

I heard about a Pastor who decided to skip Church one Sunday morning and go play golf. He told his Associate Pastor he wasn't feeling well.

He drove to a golf course in another city where nobody would know him.

He teed off on the first hole and suddenly the wind picked up his ball and carried it an extra 100 yards and blew it right into the hole for a 420 yard Hole In One.

An angel looked at God and said, "What did you do that for?"

God smiled and said, "Who's he gonna tell?"

On this feast of the Body and Blood of Christ we celebrate the foundational Catholic truth that Christ is present, **really** present, in the Eucharist.

So, what should we say about this wondrous gift? In past centuries much theological time and effort was spent on trying to understand *how* Christ was present. But to this day, the mode of Christ's presence remains a mystery.

So today I would rather emphasize another aspect of the Eucharist and one which I think is perhaps even more important. Rather than centering on *how* Christ is present I would like us to reflect on *why* Christ is present.

Because the wondrous gift of the Eucharist allows Christ to be present for our benefit—present to help us live.

Now how does the Eucharist help us live? I would suggest to you it does so in three distinct ways. Three ways that correspond to the mystery we celebrate. What is the mystery we celebrate?

We proclaim it in the midst of the Eucharist prayer: “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” Each of these three aspects of Christ’s paschal mystery corresponds to a way in which the Eucharist helps us live.

For the Eucharist gives us the power of letting go, the power of seeing goodness, and the power of holding on.

Christ has died. We remember in this meal the wondrous love by which Christ gave his life for our salvation. Dying is about letting go. As we encounter in the Eucharist the Christ who died for us, he imparts to us the power of letting go of those aspects of our life which hold us back.

What are the things that hold us back? Each of us must answer that question from the circumstances of our lives. Perhaps we must let go of resentment or hurt or self-indulgence or addiction or prejudice or pride.

Each time we come to this meal we set those obstacles before the Lord, and the Christ who gave His life for us enables us to let go of whatever hinders us.

Christ is risen. Here is the center of our faith. We believe that the love and goodness of God was so real in the person of Christ Jesus, that God conquered even death.

As we encounter the risen Christ in the Eucharist he gives us the power to see the goodness that is a part of our life and our world. Do we need to see that goodness? Without a doubt.

How easy it is of us to center on what is wrong, what is broken, what has failed? In doing so we discount all the goodness and blessings that surround us in our lives.

What could be a greater waste than to be a blessed and loved person and never claim and celebrate that gift?

So each time we come to this meal and encounter the risen Christ we receive the strength to be thankful for the people who love us, for our health, for our talents, for the beauty of the world around us. We pray for the risen Christ to help us recognize those gifts and never take any of them for granted.

Christ will come again. Although Christ is risen, the victory of Christ is not yet complete. Evil, injustice, violence, and hatred remain a part of our world. They touch our lives. But we as a community believe Christ will come again, and when He comes the ultimate victory will be won and all evil will be destroyed.

So each time we encounter the Christ who will come again in the Eucharist He gives us the strength to hold on, to hold on in hope.

This strength allows us to believe that whatever troubles we must face, God has not forgotten us and will not abandon us. In this Eucharistic meal we pray that Christ will allow us to hold onto hope, even in the midst of family troubles, in the midst of sickness, in the midst of discouragement and failure, and yes even in the shadow of death.

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

This is the Christ who is present in the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist that this Christ gives us the power to let go of those things that hinder us, to see the goodness of the world around us, to hold on in the midst of trial.

On any particular day that we come to the Eucharist our lives might require one of these gifts more than another. But every time we come to the Eucharist the whole Christ is present to us.

So what do you come for today? What needs shape your life? Whatever you need, approach this altar with confidence, with the confidence that you will be fed.

The good news of the Eucharist is not only that Christ is present, **really** present, but that Christ is present for our benefit, present so that we might live.

While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take it; this is my body.” AMEN.