

## **The Feast of Body and Blood of Jesus Christ**

Today, we are celebrating the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. This special Feast is celebrated in remembrance of Jesus who gave His life for our salvation and commanded us to celebrate the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist in his memory. The Feast owes its existence to Blessed Juliana of Liege, who began devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in around 1230. Largely through her insistence, in 1264 Pope Urban IV commanded its observance by the universal church. The Feast sums up three important confessions about our Faith. First is that God became physically present in the person of Christ, True God and True Man. Secondly, God continues to be present in His people as they form the Mystical Body of Christ in his church. And thirdly, the presence of God under the form of bread and wine is made available to us on the altar at Mass for our nourishment and worship.

The Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ is in accordance with the command of Jesus to us, to celebrate as a community in his memory, the last meal, where he gave us the Holy Eucharist. During His ministry on earth, Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from Heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world." While these words Jesus offered his life for the sins of the humanity. During the Last Supper Jesus taught His followers the manner in which the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist should be celebrated. He also told them that He would be physically present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist and will be with them till the end of times. But his sacrifice was complete on Calvary when he shed his last drop of blood and water for the sake of humanity. This offering is a gift and every gift involves the giver and the receiver. It is sacrifice to the giver and gift to the receiver.

Jesus here uses the symbol of a meal to make us realize his presence. Every meal has its social dimension. Each and every celebration of ours, religious or secular, ends with a meal. A meal unites people, holds the family together and builds a community. Jesus uses this simple celebration of a meal to give us his closeness to us. It is built up on the idea of a family, where everyone shares the common food and all are equal.

Every Eucharist takes place in the context of a community. In this Communal Sacrificial Meal celebrated by the Community, we have the presence of Jesus who is the victim, the altar and the priest. He offers himself to the Father as a special offering for the reconciliation of the world. The Eucharist is offered and shared in a community as a fulfillment of the final mission of Jesus to save the world. In this communal sharing, there is no difference of region or creed or language because all partakers are equal. Several elements are involved in the word Eucharist. It is symbolic, it is a sacrifice, it is a meal, it is a memorial meal, and it is done in the community and is celebrated by the church. God is present in the world and the universe in several ways. God is present in creation and in every activity. But he is especially present to us in the Eucharist. As we break the bread at the Eucharistic table we ask the grace to be worthy of the Lord's mystery and be his instruments to bring his unity and charity in the world.

Eucharist means thanksgiving and blessing. We express our gratitude to God for all the gratuitous gifts God has given us in Jesus and we offer back to him the gratitude in the form of Bread and wine. Eucharist means a Blessing. Blessing actually means prayer of praise and glorification for all the Lord God has done for us in Jesus. It is a meal shared by the community in the name of Jesus. It is a sacrificial meal, meaning it is an offering to God as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins.

Eucharist in the church can be understood as a communal sacrificial meal, offered by the community of believers along with the priest, to the heavenly Father together with Jesus for the remission of sins and as an offering of gratitude and thanksgiving. The Eucharist is essentially and of its very nature a community action in which every person present is expected to be an active participant and the priest presides over it.

Eucharist is a sacrificial meal. It is a fulfillment of the final mission of Jesus to save the world. Therefore let us prepare ourselves to receive the Lord worthily and as we break the bread at the Eucharistic table we ask the grace to be worthy of the Lord's mystery and be his instruments to bring his unity and charity in the world. As we continue with the celebration of the Holy Mass, let us be thankful to the Lord Jesus for His Body and Blood that assures us our salvation.