

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
June 14, 2020

In the communion, preceded by the Lord's prayer and the breaking of bread, the faithful receive "the bread of heaven" and "the cup of salvation," the body and blood of Christ who offered himself "for the life of the world". (CCC 1355)

Today, we celebrate *The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ*, better known as *Corpus Christi*. We most often associate this with the Liturgy of the Eucharist celebrated at each and every Holy Mass. However, deeper examination will expose that there is more to this celebration.

In the Liturgy of the Word for this Mass is included a Sequence before the *Alleluia*. This Sequence is attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas some time around the year 1264. Recall with me the following excerpt from this beautiful writing:

Sight has failed, nor thought conceives, but dauntless faith believes, resting on a power divine.

Here beneath these signs are hidden priceless things to sense forbidden; Signs, not things are all we see.

"Signs, not things are all we see." This line from St. Thomas is a key to opening the mystery of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. St. Augustine of Hippo, like St. Thomas, was able to open these mysteries and explain the deeper significance. St. Augustine's Sermon 272 was delivered to a group of catechumens he was preparing to enter the Church. It reads in part:

. . . if it's you that are the body of Christ and its members, it's the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the Lord's table; what you receive is the mystery that means you. It is to what you are that you reply Amen, and by so replying you express your assent. What you hear, you see, is The body of Christ, and you answer, Amen.

How often have we heard discussed that the Church is the Body of Christ? As we prepare to enter into the Eucharistic celebration, we present our gifts at the altar. We see the ciborium with the unconsecrated bread and the cruet of red wine carried to the altar. Yet that is not all, for we are called to present ourselves, our lives at the altar as gifts to the Father. Those gifts are then consecrated and given back to us. As the Body of Christ, His Church, our lives are returned, consecrated and made whole, are returned for us to use in the service of the Lord. At the same time, we receive the Host and the Precious Blood for nourishment for our own body and soul.

St. Augustine goes on to say:

One bread; what is this one bread? The one body which we, being many, are. Remember that bread is not made from one grain, but from many. When you were being exorcised, it's as though you were being ground. When you were baptized it's as though you were mixed into dough. When you received the fire of the Holy Spirit, it's as though you were baked . . . Brothers and sisters, just remind yourselves what wine is made from; many grapes hang in the bunch, but the juice of the grapes is poured together in one vessel.

As we celebrate this Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ and in a few minutes partake of the holy food in the Eucharist, let us remember the final words of St. Augustine to his students:

Be what you can see, and receive what you are.