

## Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), Year C

### GOSPEL

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Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing.

It was late afternoon when the Twelve came to him and said, 'Send the people away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and food; for we are in a lonely place here.' He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' But they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go ourselves and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. But he said to his disciples, 'Get them to sit down in parties of about fifty.' They did so and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the crowd. They all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps remaining were collected they filled twelve baskets.

(Luke 9:11-17)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The actions of our eucharistic celebration are based on the actions of Jesus in this gospel text and later at the Last Supper: the priest takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it and distributes to all who come to the table.
- The twelve baskets full of remaining food signify that the Eucharist can meet all our needs. The abundance of the Eucharist is enough, indeed more than enough, to fill and sustain us.
- The abundant feast is an image associated with the coming of the Messiah, the advent of God's kingdom. In this gospel text, Jesus is bringing an experience of God's reign in the present time to those whom he fed in such abundance.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

The attitude of Jesus towards the crowd is starkly contrasted with the attitude of the Twelve. Jesus welcomes all who come to him, patiently explains his message of the kingdom and offers healing to all those in need of it. By contrast, the Twelve, anxious about their paucity of resources, suggest that the crowd must be sent away to search out their own nourishment. Jesus presents for them a model of how they should respond: with generosity and trust in God. Significantly, Jesus hands back the food to the apostles to distribute among the crowd. They are given the ministry of feeding the multitude. For Luke, the Twelve are the foundation of the Church. This Church, founded on the Twelve, must never cease to nourish those who come seeking healing and the kingdom. The Church is made up of its members, so each one of us has the responsibility to use what resources we have to meet the needs of others.

- What are some of the implications of this understanding of this text?
- Are they confined to our immediate community or are they global in scope? How does this idea challenge us further?
- In what ways are the Church and its members helping to meet your needs at present?
- In what ways are the Church and its members helping to meet the needs of the world?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Have you ever been in a 'lonely place'?
- How do you make people welcome?
- What needs healing in you?
- How is your 'hunger' being fed by Jesus?
- Jesus tells the disciples that they should feed the crowd themselves. What resources do you have to offer that may help feed the needs of those people you know? Share a story of a time when you were able to help someone in their time of need. Share a story of a time when someone was able to help you.
- Spend a little time each day reflecting on your needs and how your journey towards Christ is helping to feed those needs. Try to help someone find a way out of their 'lonely place'.
- This week's gospel acclamation makes a beautiful reflection. Pray it often:

*I am the living bread from heaven, says the Lord;  
Whoever eats this bread will live forever.*

## SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

The eucharistic feast, as the Church celebrates it today, emerged in the thirteenth century at a time when people received Holy Communion very rarely. In fact, a church law was needed to encourage people to receive the Eucharist at least once a year during the Easter season.

- You could give some of the historical background to this attitude.

Today, for Catholics, the Eucharist is 'the source and summit' of the life of the Church and the faithful.

- Talk about what that means. You could refer to the passage from *Lumen Gentium* (§11), a document from the Second Vatican Council, where this is explained, or you could refer to the part of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§1324) where this concept is dealt with.
- You could talk about the four ways we understand Christ to be present in the Eucharist.
- You could explain the concept of 'fasting' before receiving communion, discussing how that practice has changed over time and appropriate ways to prepare to receive Christ.

## SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

'The lonely place' where this action occurs is a symbol of our own longing to be filled, our yearning to belong. Jesus welcomes all who come and he cures those in need of healing. For Christians, the Eucharist satisfies all the needs of those who come to the table of the Lord. They are fed and nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ.

## LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- 'Feed' others this week. In what ways can this be interpreted?
- If it is possible, you could spend some time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. You could pray for all those who are nourishing your own journey towards full participation in the Eucharist. A suitable song could be 'Bread of Life, Hope for the World' (GA 199). Conclude with the prayer of blessing in the RCIA at §97C.

## NOTES

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