

Today we celebrate the feast day of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. It is what truly defines us as Catholics. It is for the very reason that we are baptized or confirmed as a Catholic from other faiths. The Eucharist is what sustains everything that we believe of in our faith.

When we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, our amen is not only for the Eucharist, but for everything that surrounds it – the priesthood, the Pope, dogmas and traditions; our sacramentals, such as *blessing ourselves* with holy water; our love of Our Lady, the saints and for all who have *gone before us* in faith.

As we heard from our first reading the Jews offered animal sacrifices to God, believing that life was in the blood and animal blood was a substitute for human blood. They *also believed* that the essence of God, and the essence of all life, is found in the blood.

They would always drain the animal of blood, never consuming what belongs only to God. Moses sprinkled it upon the people to cement the covenant between God and the Jewish people – it was the promise of new life with God.

Jesus says to us, however, to take his body, to take his blood that we might have the life of God *in us*. What was once only offered to God, is offered to us from God. This covenant is not just to the Jewish people, but to all people. In the Eucharist, we are one people, one family in communion with one another. We can go in any country and find the same Mass, the same readings – united in the Eucharist.

+Nora Gallagher writes: "Communion is meant to be done together; it has to be done in community. You can pray *alone* and fast *alone*. You can even go on pilgrimage *alone*. But you can't take Communion alone." A Eucharistic Minister might bring communion to one who is alone, but this minister represents the communion to the entire Church.

"Communion forces us to *be* with others [and] stand with them. We are forced to be with strangers and people we may not like, persons of different colors and those with bad breath or breathing cheap alcohol . . . We are stuck with each other, at that altar, at least for a few minutes."

For this to happen, Jesus transferred Passover to himself. He would now be the Lamb of sacrifice that shed its blood on the altar of the cross.

He is the Lamb of God, who says, "*Take this, all of you; this is my body, my blood, offered to you.*" Compare this to the abortion supporter, who claims "*My body!*" The child is then *sacrificed* for that person.

Jesus offers his body as the sacrifice for the others *to live*. Does not a true parent image this? They also offer themselves for their children.

+Jeff Ebert shares his experience of this. When he was five years old, before factory installed seatbelts and auto airbags, his family was driving home at night on a two-lane road.

He was sitting in mom's lap when another car, driven by a drunk driver, swerved into their lane and hit them head on.

After the impact, *Ebert* was literally covered with blood from head to toe. He soon learned the blood was not his, but that of his mother.

In that split second before impact, she had pulled her son closer to her chest and curled her body around his body. It was her body that slammed against the dashboard, her head that shattered the *windshield*. She took the impact, she stood in for him. Jesus took the impact for our sin as we are washed in the blood of the Lamb.

In the Eucharist, we are fed the food of eternal life. Bear in mind that it is in the physical "stuff" that we find the spiritual. Some think that if we dissociate ourselves from all that is matter, we will have a richer spiritual life.

Obviously, this is not true for it was in the physical, visible body of Jesus that revealed the hidden Presence of God. In the physical "*stuff*" of bread and wine comes God once again.

Yes, God is *everywhere*, but it is hard to focus on "*everywhere*". In Jesus, God is brought to focus. Via the Church, *in* the Eucharist, God continues *to do so*. The Eucharist *shapes* and *channels* what is *already present* before us.

In the Eucharist, we hold God in our hands or tongue and what we hold has more love than the *entire world can fathom*.

God allows us to do so, so that we can say with certainty, "Here is God! There is Christ!" (Pointing to tabernacle). The red candle burns eternally as a sign of his eternal presence to us.

Partaking of his Body and Blood means we are being *transformed* into Body of Christ. You see, when we receive Jesus (worthily) we can then *perceive* in others and declare: "There is Christ!" (Pointing to members of the congregation). Here also, is the Real Presence of Christ.

+I remember before my grandmother died, she wrote my name on the back of a wooden cross, as she wanted me to have it after she died.

When I see that cross I *experience* the feeling of love from her. The Eucharist is what Christ left us to *forever* remember his love for us.

In the close of Matthew's gospel, Christ says to us: "*And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.*" The Eucharist is our proof; he is with us with us always, until the *end of the age. Body and blood.*