

The Body and Blood of Christ (Yr A)
[Reading I: Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a](#)
[Responsorial Psalm: 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20](#)
[Reading II: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17](#)
[Gospel: John 6:51-58](#)



The readings may be found at:
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/061123.cfm>

In cycle A, the readings focus on the Body of Christ and upon bread. On Holy Thursday, the Church commemorated Christ's gift of himself at the Last Supper as one theme among several. As the Church enters back into the ordinary action of God, our attention is drawn to the central role that the Eucharist plays in our lives week by week. In gathering for the Eucharistic liturgy each Sunday, we reconnect with the source of our life and our mission to be the Body of Christ in this time and this place.

The Book of Deuteronomy recalls Moses' teaching at the end of the sojourn from Egypt to the promised land. During this time, the people were freed from slavery, were guided through desert land, and faced many hardships, including thirst and hunger. Throughout these times, God guided and provided them with water from the rock and manna to eat. The physical suffering was a sign of their inner struggle and hunger. From where would they get life?

Manna became a sign in the Jewish tradition of the wisdom of God. As people hunger for direction, purpose, and life, God's wisdom is the source of life and meaning. The Torah is the self-revelation of God (who God is) and God's will for humanity (commandments). Seeking life from other sources will lead to disappointment. Seeking to know God will provide life and all that one needs, even in the face of trials and hardships. People live "by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the LORD."

A second aspect of Moses' speech is the importance of remembering all that God has done for us as a community and individually. Our contemporary culture is very future-oriented. What are your plans? What challenges need to be faced today? The scriptures envision the future growing out of what is already. God, who has been faithful in the past, will be faithful today and tomorrow. One can look forward confidently because God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. God's care, mercy, and love never change.

The context for the second reading is that it follows the admonition to avoid idolatry, particularly meat that has been sacrificed to idols. Paul challenges the Corinthians to live fully as Christians. The "participation" in the body and blood of Christ has two levels of meaning. First, it is a participation by consuming the body and blood of Christ in communion. In receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, one participates in the life of Christ. One takes the life of Christ into oneself. It is not only a reception of Christ but also a participation in the dying and rising of Christ. One joins the life of Christ in his self-gift of himself.

Secondly, it is also a participation in the Christian community as the Body of Christ. The one loaf and the one cup are symbols that each person shares in the common life of the Body of Christ. All who share in the loaf and cup share a common life together and are members of each other. In this context, participants are part of the living Body of Christ today and called to live as part of a body, a community.

The Gospel passage comes from the end of the Bread of Life discourse. The language of eating and drinking would have shocked the original audience. Jews maintained a strict practice of avoiding contact with blood. Jesus, though has the connection between the

manna and the self-revelation of God (presented in the Deuteronomy passage) as the background for saying that he is the Living Bread come down from heaven. To be nourished by Jesus, each disciple is called to live like Jesus and act like Jesus. This includes loving God and neighbor, forgiving enemies, washing one another's feet, and laying down one's life for each other. Participation in the Eucharist is not simply consuming the Body and Blood of Jesus and being content with oneself. Being a Eucharistic people demands both a belief in God's presence and a commitment to living like Jesus each day.

The reflection that Jesus offers summarizes the salvation mystery. Jesus came into the world as the Living Bread to reveal God. Jesus lovingly gave himself for others, even surrendering to death. Jesus is risen and present in the Eucharist, giving eternal life to all who believe.

Themes:

Eucharist

Church as Community

Body of Christ

Christian Unity

Reflection Questions:

From which sources do you draw life?

How has God been active in your life? For what are you grateful?

How do disciples participate in the Body of Christ? What challenges are there for you in being part of the Body of Christ?

How is Jesus a revelation of God in your life?

What will participating in the Eucharist mean to you?

Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that through our sharing in the Eucharist, we may be transformed more and more into the Body of Christ

For deeper communion with Christ: that as we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, we may take on the mind and heart of Christ and continue the mission of Jesus

For all who cannot receive the Eucharist, particularly those in isolation, in refugee centers, or imprisoned for their faith: that God will strengthen them and make God's presence known to them through other

For all who are suffering from famine or drought: that God will nurture them, sustain them on their journey, and supply the assistance they need

For Christian unity: that Christ's Body and Blood given for us may heal all the divisions within the Christian community and bind us together into one body in love and service