

Today we celebrate the solemnity of the body and blood of Christ. This Feast owes its existence to Blessed Juliana, an Augustinian Nun, in Liege, France, who had a great veneration for the Blessed Sacrament around 1230 and longed for a special feast in its honor. Largely through her insistence, in 1264 Pope Urban IV commanded its observance by the Universal Church. This feast invites us to understand the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is the center of our Christian belief and life. It is our celebration of the most beautiful and precious gift that God has given us. It is a sacrament, a visible sign that gives us God's grace and life. It is the sacrifice of Calvary. And we offer Jesus' sacrifice to God the Father on the altar during Eucharistic celebration for the remission of our sins, using signs and symbols. In the Eucharist Jesus is really present and gives himself to us as a spiritual food and drink.

In the first Reading, Moses advises the people of Israel not to forget the deeds God had done for them when they travelled through the desert after being freed from the slavery of Egypt. He recalls the way in which God fed them in the desert with manna, that miraculous food which Christians were later to see as a prefiguration of the Eucharist. In the second Reading St. Paul gives a powerful witness of the Eucharistic faith to the Christian community. He says, the Eucharist builds the Church, Jesus Christ is the head.

This feast reminds us 3 things. (1) **Jesus' presence among us.** Jesus promised to be with us until the end of time. In the Eucharist he provides a visible sign and an effective means of him being present to us and we being present to him. As Jesus himself said, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them." (2) **The gift of Life.** Jesus said that he came that we might have life and have it to the full in this world and the next. He also said, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day". As the manna in the desert gave life to the Israelites that they could continue their journey towards the promised land, so in the Eucharist Jesus gives life to us as nourishment for our spiritual journey towards our heavenly home land. 3) **The gift of Unity.** Eucharist builds up the people in communion with God and one another. That's why it's called the Holy Communion. Participation in the body and blood of Christ is the source of the life and unity of the Church as one body. Through eating the bread and drinking the cup Christians are united to Christ in an intimate fellowship. St. Paul says " Though we are many, we are one in the Eucharist. When we share the one body of Christ we create a divine society.

The Eucharist is true food and drink but at the same time it is very different from every other food and drink. We transform ordinary food into our own bodies but the food of the Eucharist transforms us into the body of Christ. Let us today approach the Eucharist with a more lively faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and we shall experience therein God's saving power and transforming love. Let us pray this day for a greater appreciation and deeper respect and love for the Body and Blood of Christ. Amen.