



## CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

June 2, 2013

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood (Corpus Christi)

### Gospel reading Luke 9:11B-17 [To be read aloud]

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured. As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, "Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here." He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves." They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people." Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty." They did so and made them all sit down. Then taking the five loaves and the two fish,

and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

### Brief commentary:

All four gospels contain a Last Supper account. The Synoptics relate the institution of the Eucharist, and the gospel of John presents a discourse on Jesus as the "the bread come down from heaven for the life of the world." And of the many miracles and signs of Jesus presented in the gospels only the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fish are found in all four. In addition, Paul's letter to the Corinthians, which we read today, offers us the most ancient written account of the institution of the Eucharist. All of this, and many more texts, such as the recognition of the risen Christ by the disciples in the "breaking of the bread" at Emmaus, attests to the importance that the Eucharist already held in the earliest Christian communities. On this solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of the Lord (Corpus Christi), the readings all center of the meaning and significance of the Eucharist. They also offer the Old Testament preludes to the priesthood found in the first reading and in the psalm. As God had provided for the Israelites in the desert with quail and manna (bread from heaven), so now "in a deserted place," at the slopes of the Galilee, Jesus provides for the multitude that has come to hear his word about the kingdom and to be healed by him. The Eucharist will sustain and nourish, refresh and restore, vivify and fortify the Church and her mission as she journeys in this desert world until her members reach the Promised Land of the fullness of the Kingdom of God. In the Eucharist, Jesus, who had lived – and given – life for us, now gives us the gift of himself. "This is my body given for you." Jesus' complete self-donation, his unreserved love, which was the defining characteristic of life, now, at the Last Supper and the Cross, become the sign of new and everlasting covenant, the enduring sign of God's love for the world. His disciples must likewise become *eucharistic*. As unleavened bread prior to consecration, the host is the humble bread of the poor, and calls us to remember and attend with loving service to those who hunger for food, for conditions of dignified living, for liberty, justice, companionship, direction, friendship, support, hope, faith, for love. The Blood of Christ, poured out, gives us life and brings atonement, redemption, and the forgiveness of sins. This blood is the seal of the new and everlasting covenant, sealed with the most precious substance, the life of the Son and Lamb of God. In the Eucharist the presence of Jesus Christ remains with us and accompanies us as Christians and as a Church throughout our journey. The Eucharist empowers us to follow Jesus by living his Gospel and witnessing to it with generosity and authenticity. The Body and Blood of Christ is the living sign of Christ's love for each of us, and at the same time it inspires our hearts to love God and neighbor wholeheartedly, and thus becoming eucharistic by giving our lives as gift for the life of the world. The Eucharist is therefore the real link between the historical mission of Jesus and his Paschal Mystery and the life of Christians and their mission in the world. This feast, celebrated between the Easter Season and Ordinary Time, emphasizes that essential link. At the heart of the Christian Church is not merely *something*, but *Someone*, Jesus Christ, in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is our 'communion' with the living Body and Blood of the Risen Christ that enables us, by the power of the Spirit, to *live in communion* with God and with one another, and thus live as members of the Body of Christ in mission on behalf of the salvation of the world.

### Today's reading offers significant messages:

- We find Jesus at the heart of his ministry and mission: teaching, healing, and feeding the hungry. Jesus is concerned for the people in the deserted place, just as God had provided for the Israelites along their journey through the desert.
- The Eucharist, central to the life of the very earliest communities, is the sign of the Jesus' total loving self-donation to the Father for our salvation. This total self-gift is evident throughout his life, and especially at his redemptive suffering and death: "This is my Body [my life] given for you."
- "Receiving the Body of Christ we become the Body of Christ," we grow in communion with God and one another, and are called to be eucharistic by our own self-donation to God and neighbors.

### For our shared or personal reflection:

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

- What meaning does the Eucharist have for me and what does it remind me of?
- What does the Eucharist call me to?
- How can I become more eucharistic?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1322-1419