

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

The Feast of Corpus Christi—Year C

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Reading I

Genesis 14:18-20

In those days, Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words:

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
the creator of heaven and earth;
and blessed be God Most High,
who delivered your foes into your hand."

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 110:1, 2, 3, 4

R (4b) You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

The LORD said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand
till I make your enemies your footstool."

R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

The scepter of your power the LORD will stretch forth from Zion:

"Rule in the midst of your enemies."

R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

"Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendor;
before the daystar, like the dew, I have begotten you."

R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

The LORD has sworn, and he will not repent:

"You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

Reading II

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Brothers and sisters:

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

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Alleluia

John 6:51

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord; whoever eats this bread will live forever.

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel

Luke 9:11b-17

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 lodgings 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.

Exegesis

Genesis 14:18-20

Four kings of the eastern region south of the Dead Sea defeated five kings in the area west of the Jordan. As a part of that conquest Lot, his family and his possessions were taken captive. Lot is Abram's nephew. Abram and a cohort of 318 of his soldiers set out and defeated the four kings and rescued Lot and his family and recovered all of possessions that were previously captured. Now the king of Sodom, who was the leader of the defeated five kings came out to meet Abram with a show of gratitude. The stage is set by the verse preceding our pericope: "When Abram returned from his victory over Chedorlaomer and the kings who were allied with him, the king of Sodom went out to greet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley)." (Gen 14: 17).

His greeting is interrupted by the entrance of Melchizedek, the king of Salem, (later called Jerusalem). Some scholars suggest that Melchizedek is being referred to here as the king of peace. They reference the following passage from *Hebrews*:

This "Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High," "met Abraham as he returned from his defeat of the kings" and "blessed him." And Abraham apportioned to him a "tenth of everything." His name first means righteous king, and he was also "king of Salem," that is, king of peace. Without father, mother, or ancestry, without beginning of days or end of life, thus made to resemble the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. (Heb 7: 1-3).

In Hebrew *salem* or *shalem* is a derivative to the Hebrew word *shalom*, which is translated as *peace*. Salem was subsequently renamed Jerusalem, signifying the "City of Peace." Melchizedek may have been both the king of Jerusalem and the king of peace.

From the earliest of biblical times, it was customary for kings to be ritual priests as well. It seemed to be a part of their priestly duties. A good example of this is King David as described in 2 Samuel:

The ark of the Lord was brought in and set in its place within the tent David had pitched for it. Then David offered holocausts and peace offerings before the Lord. When he finished making these offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts. He then distributed among all the people, to each man and woman in the entire multitude of Israel, a loaf of bread, a cut of the roast meat, and a raisin cake. (2 Sam 6: 17-19).

Melchizedek is proposed to be the leader of the Canaanite kings, taking control of the narrative. He perhaps unwittingly calls on the name of Yahweh in his blessing of Abram. *El* was the name given to the chief god of the Canaanite pantheon. *El* was also a poetic expression of one of the Hebrew names for God, *Elohim*. In the Hebrew text in our pericope, it is *El-Elyon*, God Most High. Melchizedek recognized God as creator of heaven and earth and is therefore calling on the name of Yahweh or *Elohim*, the true God. He also acknowledges the power of God in delivering Abram and the five defeated kings from the hands of their victors.

David in *Psalms 110* verse four reveals Melchizedek as a foreshadowing of the Messiah: "The LORD (Yahweh) has sworn, and he will not repent: 'You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.'" (Ps 110: 4).

The fact that Melchizedek brought gifts of bread and wine also foreshadowed the Eucharist. Abram's response with a tenth of everything is foundational of the tradition of tithing.

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 110:1, 2, 3, 4

Psalm 110 consists of seven verses. It is titled *God Appoints the King both King and Priest – A Psalm of David*. Most scholars date this psalm early in the monastic period of Israel. During the time of David and Solomon it was customary for the king to serve both as political leader and as ritual/Levitical priest. The psalmist is celebrating the fact that Yahweh assures the king that his enemies have been conquered, that the king has been begotten by Him, i.e., he is His son, and that Yahweh is appointing him as priest, like Melchizedek.

The LORD said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool."

The Hebrew word that is translated as *LORD* at the beginning of the verse is *Yahweh*. The underlying Hebrew word that is translated as *Lord* later in the verse is *adon*. *Adon* can be translated as *Lord, master, or owner*. It was often used to speak of God to avoid speaking the unspeakable name, *YWH*, i.e., *Yahweh*. The underlying Hebrew word for *LORD* in subsequent verses of Psalm 110 is *Yahweh*. In verse one *Lord* is referring to the king, which will later come to be understood as the Messiah, the Christ. Jesus, Himself, reveals that this psalm is speaking of Him: "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus questioned them, 'What is Your opinion about the Messiah? Whose son is He?' They replied, 'David's.' He said to them, 'How, then, does David, inspired by the Spirit call him 'lord,' saying: *The Lord said to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool?'*'" (Mt 22: 41-43).

Melchizedek is introduced in Genesis Chapter 14: "Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words: 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand.' Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything." (Gen 14: 19-20). Melchizedek is later referenced in Hebrews Chapter 7: "His name first means righteous king, and he was also "king of Salem," that is, king of peace. Without father, mother, or ancestry, without beginning of days or end of life, thus made to resemble the Son of God, he remains a priest forever." (Heb 7: 2-3).

Exegesis (Continued)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Our scripture passage today is taken from a larger narrative where St. Paul is addressing the Church at Corinth concerning some abuses that he was made aware of relative to the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Roman and Greek culture of the time was heavily emersed in social class differentiation. It was culturally expected to offer special treatment and respect to the elite and the upper class. In the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in Corinth the elite were offered preferential treatment.

St. Paul begins by reminding the people that his authority was handed on to him directly from the Lord Himself. Jesus allowed Himself to be handed over to the Cross. This ultimate act of humility should humble each one of us. To put on the heart and mind of Christ is to recognize everyone as more important than ourselves.

St. Paul recalls the words of Jesus at the Last Supper. By the power of the words of the Word made flesh the bread becomes His Body, and the wine becomes His Blood. The Greek word for remembrance is *anamnesis*, which means to make present again what once was. The point that St. Paul is making is that if we are at the Last Supper with Jesus, there is no room to mistreat anyone who is lower in social stature. The elite should get on their hands and knees and wash the feet of the lowly and down trod; not exclude them.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. The separate consecration of the bread and the wine remind us of the death of Jesus on the Cross. The bread becomes His Body given up on the Cross. The wine becomes His Blood poured out on the Cross. *Until He comes* reminds us of His promise to be with us until the end of the age.

Luke 9:11b-17

In *The New American* bible this passage is titled *The Return of the Twelve and the Feeding of the Five Thousand*. The feeding miracle story is either part of, or certainly linked to, the mission of the twelve. “He (Jesus) summoned the Twelve and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and He sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” (Lk 9: 1-2).

There are six accounts of the feeding miracle story in the Gospels, two each in Matthew and Mark, one in Luke and John. Most scholars agree that there were at least two historical events that are being referenced, the feeding of the four thousand and the feeding of the five thousand. In each event large crowds gather, they are in a deserted place, i.e., a place where food is scarce, hunger is acknowledged, someone suggests that the provisions they have are inadequate, Jesus takes the meager gifts, says the Eucharistic words, the transformed gifts are given to the Apostles to give to the people gathered, all are satisfied, and there are always leftovers, either seven or twelve baskets. With minor variations, this is the general trend of events.

Exegesis (Continued)

Luke 9:11b-17

The positioning of this event by Luke as part of the Apostolic mission, a culmination of their mission, suggests that it is an integral part of their apostolate. It would seem to overlap and even fulfill their mission of preaching and healing. The miracle story looks forward to the Last Supper when Jesus commands them to “do this in remembrance of Me.” Later, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, we are told that the Christian Community gathered for the breaking of the bread: “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to prayers.” (Acts 2: 42).

The feeding miracles certainly recall the miraculous manna which fed Israel during the wandering years in the desert. They also bring to mind the miracle of the Prophet Elisha: “A man came from Baal-shalishah bringing the man of God twenty barley loaves made from the first-fruits, and fresh grain in the ear. “Give it to the people to eat,” Elisha said. But his servant objected, “How can I set this before a hundred men?” “Give it to the people to eat,” Elisha insisted, “For thus says the Lord, ‘They shall eat and have some left over.’” And when they had eaten, there was some left over as the Lord had said.” (2 Kgs 4: 42-44).

Feeding and serving His people is a part of God’s plan. At the Last Supper Jesus makes it clear to His disciples, “I am among you as the one who serves.” (Lk 22: 27).

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. Contained here are the Eucharistic words, He took, He blessed, He broke, He gave.

These words appear in some form in all of the feeding miracle stories, in the accounts of the Last Supper, and on the *Road to Emmaus*, where the two disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread. St. Paul also echoes the Eucharistic words in his account of the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians.

They all ate and were satisfied. The underlying Greek word for *satisfied* is *chortazo*. It is a word that is sometimes translated as *fulfilled*. It is a word that was used to describe the fulfillment of natural physical hunger as well as spiritual hunger or yearning. Luke uses the same word in his version of the Beatitudes: “Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied (*chortazo*).” (Lk 6:21). Luke uses the same word in the *Canticle of Mary*: “The hungry He had filled (*chortazo*) with good things; the rich He has sent away empty.” (Lk 1:53).

And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets. As mentioned earlier, in each of the feeding miracles stories there are either seven or twelve baskets of leftovers. Seven is recognized as the perfect number and twelve represents completeness. There are twelve tribes of Israel and there are twelve Apostles. The leftovers, themselves, represent abundance. All are satisfied and in addition there are always leftovers. The twelve could represent one basket for each of the Apostles to continue to feed the world. I envision those leftovers, the abundance of God’s love, still feeding the world distributed to the people at each Mass.

Reflection

The beloved disciple John wrote in his First Letter, “God is love.” He also penned in his Gospel that famous passage, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that those who believe in Him might not perish but have eternal life.” Most bibles contain a footnote to John 3:16 that points to the gift of the Son in the incarnation and the gift of Jesus on the Cross. I would add to that footnote the gift of Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist, which embodies both the incarnation and the sacrifice on Calvary. God is love and love is the sharing of life. The sharing of love and life involves a mutual and perpetual gift and response between two persons in a deep abiding relationship. God desires such a relationship with each one of us. Nowhere on this earth is that sharing of love and of life more real, more substantial, and more personal than in the gift of God to each one of us in the gift of the Most Holy Eucharist, where God gives us His only begotten Son, body, blood, soul, and divinity. It is impossible to understand the depth and breadth of this infinite mystery. Yet, we must try.

As all things it begins with God’s choice. God chooses to share His life with us out of love. He chose to send His only Son into our world so that we might experience His love. He chose to die on the Cross so that we might see His love. He chose to establish His Church on the rock of St. Peter so that He might communicate His love. He chooses to share His life with us in the Most Holy Eucharist so that we might become His love.

In the beginning God spoke all of creation into existence. God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. Through the Angel Gabriel God spoke the incarnation. There is a power in God’s word to effect reality. When Jesus said to the cripple, “Rise and pick up your mat,” the lame man walked, when Jesus said to the stormy sea, “be still,” the waters quieted. When Jesus said to Lazarus, “come out,” the man who had been dead for four days rose from the dead. So, when Jesus takes bread and says, “This is My Body,” the bread becomes His Body. When Jesus takes the cup of wine and water and says, “This is my Blood,” the wine and water become His Blood. When Jesus commands the apostles, “Do this in remembrance of Me,” He is ordaining them to act in His person and recreate this perpetual event.

The underlying word for that we translate as *remembrance* is *anamnesis*. The Jewish understanding of the word means to make present again what once was. At the annual celebration of the Feast of Passover, for example, the people would dress for the Exodus journey and stand with walking stick in hand. They would make present again that first Passover experience such that all, especially those that were not yet born, could experience the saving hand of God once more. Therefore, when Jesus commands, “Do this in remembrance of Me,” He is empowering us to make present again the Last Supper and the one Sacrifice of Calvary such that we are at the Table of the Lord, and at the foot of the Cross with Mary and with John. We receive His Body given up for us and we receive His Blood poured out for us. At the foot of the Cross the blood and water that flowed from His pierced side washes us clean and floods us with His grace.

We must come to the altar to receive this amazing gift. At an even deeper level, we are called to enter the mystery of divine life. God is inviting us into the community of love that He is. When we connect to the source of all that is, then we are in communion, i.e. a common union, with all that is. It is a cosmic connection with all created and uncreated reality. Heaven’s door is open, and we are in communion with the Triune God, with Mother Mary and the heavenly hosts of angels and saints.

All our lives must be a response to this amazing gift. Our first response must be *Eucharistia*, i.e., thank you. In right praise and worship before God, gratitude should be our first response. And so, we say, “Amen.”

With gratitude,



Personal Witness

This weekend we celebrate the great feast of Corpus Christi, the Body of Christ. Since my earliest childhood memories, I have had a strong faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist. I remember my First Communion very vividly. I even remember where I was sitting in the little church in Flat Rock. I remember where I knelt as I received Jesus for the first time. I even remember my prayers as I returned to the pew surrounded by my family. I had no doubt that I had received Jesus on my tongue and in my heart that day and at every Mass that would follow.

My understanding of this gift has grown with age and my unshakeable faith in the real and substantial presence of Jesus grows even stronger each day. In recent years I am starting to see more clearly the cosmic reality of the Most Holy Eucharist. I am seeing all sacred scripture and all of life through the lens of this gift. At its deepest level it is the gift of life itself. Our God of love wants to share His life with us. His body given up and His blood poured out is the ongoing gift of God's divine life to us. That is why Jesus said very clearly, "Unless you eat My body and drink My blood you do not have life within you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life." (Jn 6: 53-54).

The giving up and the pouring out of God's love is an ongoing reality. God is the giver and the sustainer of all life. Because God is the source of this life, life is eternal. To remain connected to this source of life is our gateway into the glory of heaven. Because of the gift of freewill, and love must be free, or it would not be love, we have the God given ability to remain in God's love or to separate ourselves from His love. This separation is referred to as death in sacred scripture and ultimately this separation from God is called Hell. We must make the personal choice to remain in God's love. Nowhere in the world is this connection with the pouring out of God's love and God's life more real and tangible than on the altar that we approach at Mass.

Each time that we celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the heavens are opened, and the Holy Spirit pours down upon the altar to transform our gifts of bread and wine into the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. By the power of the word of God, the word that spoke everything into existence, the bread becomes His Word made flesh and the wine and water become His blood poured out. The Last Supper is made present again and Jesus is there on the Cross on the Hill of Calvary, and we are there with Mother Mary and all the saints in Christ.

Where Jesus is, there are the Father and the Holy Spirit, for they are One. The Trinity of God that entered our world so powerfully as Jesus came out of the water of the Jordan River at His baptism enters our world anew each time that we celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The mystery of the Trinity of God that we were once baptized into is present in the here and now. When we give ourselves to God we enter a mutual indwelling of life. When we connect to the source of all that is, we become connected to all that is, that ever was and that ever will be. No wonder we call this common union, Communion. Think about that as you approach the altar this weekend and every time that you enter the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Enter Divine Life!

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

Yours in the Body of Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Glenn".