

Corpus Christi (B)

7th June 2015

'Contained in the very smallest'

Ex 24: the blood of the Old Covenant

Heb 9: *how much more effectively the blood of Christ can purify our inner self*

Mk 14: 12–16; 22–26: *this is my Body, this is my Blood, the blood of the covenant*

I always find it beautiful that, just days after the conclusion of the Easter season, and having celebrated the Holy Trinity last Sunday, we come now to highlight the Blessed Sacrament of Jesus's presence in the Church on this feast of *Corpus et Sanguis Christi*: "The Body & Blood of the Lord." The culmination of all that God the Holy Trinity has done for us is that He gives Himself to us in the Holy Mass. That eternal sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross; that glorious victory over death in the Resurrection; that happy return to heaven in the Ascension, taking with Him our human flesh; that powerful world-changing gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed on the Church at Pentecost ... All these loving acts of our loving God ... these are all wrapped up in the gift of the Holy Mass. Everything that Jesus is, everything that He wishes for us, is contained within the simple forms of the Eucharist. It's an awesome thing, that at the heart of our faith is the highest reality, the Almighty

Son of God, choosing to conceal Himself in the simplest things, the appearance of bread and wine, as food and drink for our souls.

There is a saying of St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, which Pope Benedict and also Jesuit Pope Francis have been known to quote. It runs something like this: "not to be limited by the greatest ... and yet to be contained in the very smallest — this is divine." Nowhere is this more true than in the Eucharist. God has chosen not only to take flesh, humbling as that was, but He has chosen to stoop lower — to be "contained in the very smallest" — and restrict Himself to the outward forms of the Mass. He has, literally, placed Himself into our hands. Such humility is characteristic of God: in His divine loving, He desires more to be with us than to cling on to His majesty. Since He cannot approach us in the fullness of His awesome glory, He chooses instead to come to us in ways that we can understand appreciate. So, He comes in the flesh, God made Man, to speak the Word of God to us in human speech ... And then He reduces Himself to the

appearances of bread and wine, offering us His very Body and Blood so that He can come and dwell within us, nourishing us, giving us His life, for the flourishing of our life.

The longer we contemplate this mystery, the more we cannot help being moved deeply in love for God. All this, God has done for us! All this, God is willing to do for us ... for me! So deeply does He care for me, and wish to be with me (*in me!*), that He has given us the Eucharist. Ever since the Last Supper — as we heard in the Gospel — as Jesus began to take His leave from the apostles in the way that they had known Him for three years' ministry, we have received from Jesus this gift of Himself. He is just as present to us in the Eucharist as He was to those apostles that night of the Last Supper. Jesus's words are meant as true and real: "This is My Body ... This is My Blood ... Do this in memory of Me." The Son of God means what He says, and wants us to feast on Himself, to feast on the divine power, the grace, forgiveness and charity that flow from His divine, sacred heart. As His Sacred Body, and

His Precious Blood, are given to us from the altar of sacrifice, in Holy Communion, we are made clean, we are united to our Saviour, we are forgiven and made holy. Here are some words we heard there in the Letter to the Hebrews: "*the blood of Christ, who offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice to God through the eternal Spirit, can purify our inner self from dead actions so that we do our service to the living God.*"

As we keep this blessed feast, let's give thanks to God for all that the Mass means: all that it has meant to generations of Catholics through the centuries; all that it has meant to the saints, as they adored and served Jesus in the Mass and in their heroic lives; all that it means to us, every day, every week, the living presence of our beloved Saviour at the heart of the Church, the heart of our Sunday. Let's be stirred today, through this feast, not to take the Mass for granted; let's thank God deeply for our participation in the Mass. Nowhere else on earth can we have the intimacy with God that we enjoy in the Eucharist. *Jesus, we love you; Jesus, deepen our love for you in Mass.*