

### The Eucharist, the Center of Our Worship

By Fr. Joseph Pellegrino

Our Western mind set is analytical. We like to take things and break them down into their component parts. We analyze each part and concentrate on that part as an individual entity. We've inherited this from our Greek and Roman ancestors.

The Eastern mentality is synthetic. It sees each element as part of a whole. It relates every item to every other item. Nothing is seen as an independent entity.

It is the Eastern mentality that God used to convey his Word in scripture. It is to people of the Eastern mind set that Jesus came and established his Church. It is through the eastern mind set that we can best understand the reality of the Eucharist. Instead of analyzing the Eucharist apart from the reality of salvation, as the Western mentality would do, we need to view the Eucharist as the center of the salvation event, the passion death and resurrection of the Lord.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, our first reading for today, Moses is leading the people through the desert for forty years. Obviously, if he let his wife do it, she would have asked for directions and they would have gotten to the Promised Land sooner. Even still, during those forty years God cared for his people through the miracle of the Manna. Every day the people had a physical reminder of God's love for them. The reading tells us that we must be hungry for the Lord like the people were hungry for food in the desert. Then God will feed us just like he cared for his people. God gives us the Eucharist in answer to our hunger for him. Therefore, not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. The manna represents the sum total of God's care for his people as they journeyed to him.

When we receive communion, we receive the Word of God, Jesus Christ, the sum total of God's care for his people. This is the Body and Blood of the Lord because the Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. This is the Body of Christ, St. Paul says in the second reading to the Corinthians, because the Eucharist unites our community, we who are the Body of Christ. When we receive communion, we receive the sum total of the teachings of Christ. We receive the Word of God.

Therefore, we can't allow communion to become routine. I'm not saying that we should go back to the days of the turn of the last century when people only received a few times a year, but we should be continually reminding ourselves that the sacrament we receive every week is the most profound presence of the Word of God the world can possibly experience. Perhaps we need to come to Mass a bit early and meditate on what we are about to do. Certainly we need to pray during and after the reception of the Eucharist. It is so wrong for people to receive communion and then race out of the Church. It is almost as though they are performing a superstitious act rather than communing with God.

We can't allow our little children to ignore the reality of communion or forget what whom they are receiving in the Eucharist. Children need continual instruction and continual reminders. Parents and grandparents should watch their little ones to be sure that they are taking time to pray after they receive communion.

We Catholics can not receive communion if we have performed conscious actions we know have separated ourselves from the life of God we received at our baptism. If we have been involved in serious sin, then the reception of the Eucharist is an empty action. It is like grafting a dead branch onto a tree, a dead member of the Body of Christ can not be united to the Body through the Eucharist. If we are in serious sin, we must approach penance to restore our baptismal Life. Then we can strengthen this life in the Eucharist.

The Solemnity of Corpus Christi helps us focus on the totality of Eucharist. This is not just a meal of fellowship. This is not just a symbolic action. The Eucharist is union with Jesus, offering his life on the Cross for us and redeeming us. The Eucharist is the Community of Believers united into and by the Body of Christ. May we receive this sacrament worthily.

## READINGS OF THE WEEK

Deuteronomy 8:2-16    1 Corinthians 10:16-17    John 6:51-58

June 22, 2014

# 靈 修 生 活

## 老 太 太 的 情 書

蔡 惠 民

有一個老太太，天天都準時在信箱前等信件，她風雨無阻地出現，連郵差都和她熟悉了。每次，當她用顫抖的雙手拿起信件時，臉上滿是幸福的樣子，好不令人羨慕。當老太太去世後，家人為她整理遺物時，發現了那一疊信件，沉甸甸地，每一封都整齊的包紮在一起。打開一看，嶄新的信封裡，卻是一張張發黃的信紙，工整的字體，充滿著愛意的文章，這都是老太太年輕時，她的先生寫給她的情書。原來，久而久之，老太太便把這些信重新投寄，讓自己再次回到年輕的歲月中……

相信很多人都像老太太一樣，喜歡重溫過去，特別是一些美好及難忘的時刻，因為重溫過去，使人更把握現在，更肯定將來。當過去的片斷一幕幕重現眼前時，我們從中接觸自己的歷史根源，明白自己的身分及使命，了解自己的希望和將來。這大概是不同文化都重視傳統節日，不同團體或家庭，都強調周年紀念的原因。

為以色列人來說，他們的根便是當年出谷的經驗。在申命紀中，梅瑟多次吩咐以色列人，當紀念天主怎樣藉著奇跡聚合他們，帶領他們「經過了遼闊可怖，有火蛇蝎子的曠野，經過了乾旱無水之地」，又使水由堅硬的磐石中流出，還以「瑪納」養育了他們。時至今日，這件逾越事件的重溫，仍是凝聚以色列人最核心的慶祝。縱使他們因戰火或迫害而失去國土，但藉著逾越的紀念，以色列得以生生不息延續下去。

那麼，作為新的以色列，甚麼是基督徒的根源？甚麼經驗或事件使我們凝聚在一起？我們的出谷旅程是怎樣的？在旅程中，天主以怎樣的「瑪納」養育了我們？我們可以在甚麼紀念或慶祝中發現自己的過去、現在和將來呢？

若望認為，以上的問題，都聚焦在耶穌的聖體聖血上。耶穌的體血，是天主帶領我們出死入生的標記，也是逾越旅途中養育我們的食糧。昔日的耶穌，因著對人不離不棄的忠信，克勝了人因罪惡所帶來的死亡，為人帶來了不朽的生命，成了教會存在的根由。今天，這份深情大愛仍不斷透過聖體聖事的紀念，提供邁向永生旅程的支持和力量。所以，耶穌曾說過：「我是從天上降下的生活的食糧，就是我的肉，是為世界的生命而賜給的。」

因此，今天的讀經提醒我們，基督體血與基督徒的密切關係。如果我們否認耶穌基督，我們便否定自己的根源；如果我們否認祂是成了血肉的天主聖言，我們便否定自己的存在；如果我們否認祂的死亡和復活為我們帶來永生，我們便自拒於救恩門外；如果我們否認祂臨在於我們的祈禱和紀念中，我們便否定自己的歷史和身分。

有時，我們會問自己，怎樣才堪當稱為基督徒？我們或有犯罪及軟弱的時刻，或有疏懶跟隨基督的時刻，或有懷疑祂的教導甚至抵觸教會法律的時刻，但這些都無損我們成為基督徒，無礙我們繼續存留在祂的奧體內，因為基督徒的身分不在於我們的個別性。我們縱有種種不足，但藉著聖體聖事的紀念，耶穌再次以自己的體血，把我們凝聚在祂的奧體內。因著分享同一個餅及同一個杯，我們在信仰中的共同淵源，遠遠大於彼此在種族、語言、文化、階層、年齡……的差異。為此，保祿在格林多前書為我們總結說：「餅只是一個，我們雖多，只是一個身體，因為我們眾人都共享這一個餅。」

摘自「公教報」

## 本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 四 年 六 月 廿 二 日

申 8:2-16; 格前 10:16-17; 若 6:51-58