

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

THE BODY OF CHRIST, OUR BODY WHICH WE SHARE



SUNDAY READINGS:

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a

Psalms 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

John 6:51-58

COMMENTARY

I wonder how many of us can remember the day of our first communion. Mine happened about 66 years ago and I have a picture of me in my white dress and veil next to my grandfather. If not for the picture, I would not remember that moment. But what I do remember is waiting in our usual classroom for everyone to arrive and

process into church. It was raining that May morning and then all of a sudden, the clouds broke and the sun beamed through into our classroom. Sister Beatrice told us: "Look how Jesus loves you all! He sent his sun to shine on us!"

That was the first time that I really felt the presence of Jesus which spoke through God's creation. I come back to that today because in those days, I did not understand redemption, sacrifices, carrying a cross, but understood love. Perhaps I was a young Duns Scotus disciple and didn't even know it! It was he who proclaimed that even if we had not sinned, Jesus would still have come to give us his love and show us how to love. This love unites us as one body. One being. One fountain of love to be shared with the world.

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This body of Jesus which is our strength, our power, our joy should not be privatized. It is not Jesus and me. Just the two of us journeying along life's paths. From the Eucharist flows the mystical body of all. This is a truth which challenges us and makes us question why is there so much division, so many wounds, such a lack of genuine dialogue, so little unity? The human factor explains my questions, I know, but how can we, who believe in the Eucharist, accept these challenges and try to correspond to the deep meaning of one Body.

One of my favorite Scripture passages is in John's Gospel shortly after today's. It states that many disciples quit following Jesus because eating his body was "too hard to accept". Jesus does not call them back to explain but turns to his apostles and asks, "Do you want to go, too?" Peter answers, "Where would we go? You have the words of everlasting life." Peter didn't respond with a "Got it, Lord. I know exactly what we mean." He did not understand, but he believed in Jesus. Jesus is the living bread to strengthen the world, to feed the world in love.

Other than my personal memory, there probably is nothing new in this reflection. But let us not take the Eucharist for granted. Let every receiving of Jesus be a new moment of uniting our body with his and with all the many parts, people who form this body. We are the Body of Jesus and Jesus is my body, too.

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a: The God of the Hebrew Scriptures seems strange to us now. However, many people ask the same questions that the Israelites did, “Why does God send this suffering to me?” “Why did my young child die before she had a chance to live?” “Why was my son killed in that car crash?” Our answers are sometimes hard to understand, but like the Israelites we continue on the journey with God at our side.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20: Our God is to be praised for the blessings and strength that God showers upon us. God has revealed to us what is expected of us and does not abandon us. Once again God journeys with us giving us the best of everything even though they often come in a disguise.

Second Reading - 1 Corinthians 10:16-17: This very short reading is a powerful and inspiring one. We are one body, although we are many different parts. Every part is important and no part is excluded.

Gospel - John 6:51-58: We have the advantage of over 2,000 years of hearing this essential teaching of Jesus that we often don't perceive the challenge of his words. As John writes, the Jews quarreled over them. Who can eat the body of Jesus? This great divine mystery of the Eucharist is exactly what we need for the journey: the body and blood of Jesus to give us strength on the journey, but more important to unite ourselves profoundly with his person in love.

Notes and Commentary by Sr. Nancy Schramm, OSF. Sr. Nancy is a past-president of the USCMA and currently serves in a small rural parish. She also serves her religious community on various committees. She is a spiritual director and translates for other groups in Portuguese.

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