

The Body and Blood of Christ

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

Psalm 147

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

John 6:51-58

It was a year ago that I was sitting in the cathedral in Orvieto, Italy, celebrating the Feast of Corpus Christi. By God's providence, our pilgrimage took us to that cathedral on the feast day that was a direct result of the Eucharistic miracle displayed there. In 1263, a German priest stopped at Bolsena while on a pilgrimage to Rome. He is described as being a pious priest, but found it difficult to believe that Christ was actually present in the Eucharist. While celebrating Mass above the tomb of St. Christina, blood started to seep from the newly consecrated Host and trickle over his hands onto the altar and the corporal. The priest was immediately confused. At first he attempted to hide the blood, but then he interrupted the Mass and asked to be taken to the neighboring city of Orvieto, the city where Pope Urban IV was then residing.

The Pope listened to the priest's account and absolved him for his doubt. He then began an immediate investigation. When all the facts were ascertained, he ordered the Bishop of the diocese to bring to Orvieto the Host and the linen cloth bearing the stains of blood. The linen corporal bearing the spots of blood is still reverently enshrined and exhibited in the Cathedral of Orvieto. One year after the miracle, in August of 1264, Pope Urban IV instituted the feast of Corpus Christi.

The purpose of the feast day is not to study the *theology* of the Eucharist, but rather, to look at the *practice* of the Eucharist. By doing so, we remember that the Eucharist is the source and summit of our spiritual life and deserves our reverence and attention. Therefore, I am going to mention some of the practicalities of our reception of the Eucharist. Here are the topics I'll be addressing in the audio version of this homily—

1. The Eucharistic Fast
2. An act of reverence before receiving Communion
3. Receiving on the tongue or hand; no intinction
4. The importance of the word, "Amen."
5. The prayer of gratitude

SUGGESTED PRAYER EXERCISES:

- ✚ Read the following text from the Jerusalem Catecheses (from the early Church) and let it start your conversation with God.

“Do not... regard the Eucharistic elements as ordinary bread and wine: they are in fact the body and blood of the Lord, as he himself has declared. Whatever your senses may tell you, be strong in faith. You have been taught and you are firmly convinced that what looks and tastes like bread and wine is not bread and wine but the body and the blood of Christ. You know also how David referred to this long ago when he sang: Bread gives strength to man's heart and makes his face shine with the oil of gladness. Strengthen your heart, then, by receiving this bread as spiritual bread, and bring joy to the face of your soul. May purity of conscience remove the veil from the face of your soul so that by contemplating the glory of the Lord, as in a mirror, you may be transformed from glory to glory in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Cat. 22, Mystagoga 4, 1. 3-6. 9: PG 33, 1098-1106).