

Corpus Christi Cycle A
June 6, 1999

By Father Charles Bowes

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a
1 Corinthians 10:16-17
John 6:51-58

In Jesus we, though many, are made one, as one as blood and bone.

When this feast of the Body of Christ began in the thirteenth century, people were receiving communion infrequently and the Eucharist itself had become an object of adoration rather than food to be consumed and into which we were transformed.

Over the centuries, especially in our present day, people have begun to receive communion more frequently and are becoming increasingly aware that this sacrament is not just for private prayer, but is the agent of our transformation into what we receive – as many grains are ground to make one loaf and as many grapes are crushed to make one cup, so we who are many become the one body of Christ – this is a paraphrase of the words of St. Augustine on this great sacrament. To follow Augustine still further, the body of Christ is not only on the table but also at the table. We receive what we are; we become what we receive.

The word “we” is important. It is not just an “I” who receive communion – *we* receive holy communion and become the Body of Christ – the community of the

living Lord. We take on the characteristics of the glorified flesh and blood of Jesus – for that is what we receive. ...Not flesh and blood that we touch and feel – but the glorified flesh and blood of Jesus – Jesus in his new, transformed existence. True food, true drink. We claim in Christ so close a union with God that we are bound together as flesh is joined to bone, as blood and brain make up one being. On this Solemnity, we acknowledge ourselves as the people who have Christ in our blood, the ones in whom the Word takes flesh. But we do more than merely acknowledge this mystery; we claim it; we celebrate it; we make it the pattern of our living. In our liturgy we claim, through God’s grace, that we are in communion with Christ who is God, who is himself the mystery of communion between humanity and divinity. In our liturgy we claim, through God’s grace, that we get this presence of Christ into our flesh and blood. We do it most explicitly when we eat and drink, sharing in sacramental communion; but we also do it by praying and singing; by our silence and our response; by our standing, sitting, kneeling. By everything that we do here – each word, each gesture – we allow, give permission, to the Father to shape us into Christ so that Christ may become the pattern of our daily living, taking on our

body and blood. As we participate in Christ, Christ participates in us, so that we become the sacrament of the living Christ, we become the body and blood of Christ for the salvation of the world.

Someone once wrote that this Jesus who died as a man, rose as a people. In some Catholic parishes it is the custom that all remain standing until the last has received communion. In our parish the ministers of communion remain in their places until all have received as a sign of that Body of Christ we have become.

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