

Homily for The Body and Blood of Christ 2022

The gospel story is very familiar, indeed it is the only miracle story that appears in all four gospels which tells us something about how important it was in the collective memory of the first followers of Jesus, and how it was then committed to writing by the authors of the four gospels. This year we have Luke's version of the story and the immediate context is the return of the Twelve after their first experience of pastoral ministry. Jesus invites them to go with him to a place where they could be alone to reflect on what they had experienced. However, the crowds got to know and joined them, so our passage began, "Jesus welcomed the crowds and talked to them about the kingdom of God and cured those who were in need of healing." In doing this Jesus changed course, recognising that the needs of those who had come were greater, at this time, than those of the Twelve. By the time Jesus had finished addressing the crowds and healing the sick it was late afternoon and the disciples show both an element of concern and practicality. The crowds need food and shelter so send them off now, before it gets too dark, to get both. Jesus response is to tell them to feed the crowd themselves, again practicalities fill the disciples' minds who only have five loaves and two fish, nowhere near enough. Then Jesus takes over.

There are four key words and four key actions in the story, Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it. We notice, too, that it is the Twelve who distribute the food. We might ask who receives and who gets left out when decisions are made, locally, nationally, internationally about the distribution of food. Currently two of the largest grain exporters, Russia and Ukraine, are not able, or willing, to distribute the grain and it is the poorest who suffer the most. We then read in the gospel account that everyone had enough to eat and we might ask who gets more than enough in our world today, and who does not get enough. In our own country we are well aware of the soaring cost of basic foods like bread and milk, and many people have huge decisions to make to try and make ends meet. In other countries the situation is far worse, as movements like Bread for the World tell us. Economists assure us that there is sufficient food to feed the whole world if it was more equitably distributed.

In time the disciples realised that this miracle had a further significance, because at the last supper, and we had the earliest account in our 2nd reading, Jesus uses the same words and the same actions but this time adds words of monumental significance by calling the bread his Body, and the wine his Blood. We are invited to receive this gift, some of our younger parishioners for the very first time this weekend, in reverence and gratitude, reminding ourselves that it is a gift to be shared. We do this by reaching out to others, so that no-one is left alone, no-one feels an outsider, no-one has less than they need on which to live. This is taken up in today's Eucharist Prayer when we will ask – "Open our eyes to the needs of our brothers and sisters, inspire in us words and actions to comfort those who labour and are burdened." This is both receiving and living the Eucharist. Another example of the 'wider we' of Pope Francis.

Bidding Prayers for The Body and Blood of Christ 2022

Celebrant:

At the supper to which we are all invited Christ gives his body and blood for the life of the world. Nourished by such a great gift we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church – that the Church will always help us grow in our understanding and appreciation of the gift of Jesus, his life, his love and himself under the forms of bread and wine in Holy Communion, a gift to be shared especially with those who have so little.

Lord in your mercy

For leaders of nations and Governments – that they will do all they can to bring about reconciliation built on justice so that wars will end and all people may live in peace.

Lord in your mercy

For those who today will go without food because of draught, war or the unequal distribution of the world's resources, making fasting is a daily recurrence – that we will share something of our plenty with those who have nothing.

For all Fathers, those who have died and those still with us, - that they will receive the love and support of their children, and the blessing of God.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Covid-19 pandemic, for John Wade, Clare Byrne, Brian Wild, Ernest Robinson, John Rafferty, Peter Timothy Morris and Audrey Healey whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Merciful Father, grant the petitions we make as we are one in celebrating the holy mystery of the Body and Blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen