



LIVING THE GOSPEL



The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ June 7, 2026

Gathering Prayer

All: O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament have left us a memorial of your Passion, grant us, we pray, so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood that we may always experience in ourselves the fruits of your redemption. Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 6:51-58

Jesus said to the Jews: ⁵¹ 'I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.' ⁵² Then the Jews started arguing with one another: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' they said. ⁵³ Jesus replied: 'I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. ⁵⁴ Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶ He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. ⁵⁷ As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.'

Gospel Focus

Jesus gives a shocking instruction in today's gospel reading, one which our twenty-first-century context often sanitizes. Imagine yourself as a first-century Jew, whose tradition forbids the consumption of blood. What would your reaction be to Jesus? Intrigue? Disgust? Or belief? Immediately after today's gospel selection, we are told that many of Jesus disciples left because of this challenging saying. Throughout the Scriptures, Jesus shares some incredibly difficult things to accept, and many still more difficult to follow. "Love your enemies" (Matt 5:44). "Go, [and] from now on do not sin any more." (Jn 8:11) "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:62). Today's teaching might be the most difficult to accept. Unless we literally eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus, we are spiritually dead. We must receive the body of our Lord, present under the species of bread and wine, and become what we receive. As we prepare to enter the rhythm of Ordinary Time, we accompany Jesus in the Scriptures as he exercises his public ministry, and he accompanies us by the total gift of himself in the Eucharist.

Gospel Reflection

Scientists tells us that we are literally connected to one another and to the entire, vast

created universe. It is not a metaphor or a symbol; it is literally true that the material of all of our bodies is intrinsically related because they emerged from and are caught up in a single energetic event that is the unfolding of the universe. Our common ancestry stretches back through the life forms and into the stars, back to the primeval explosion of light that began our universe and created the atoms that made up Jesus' own human body and also yours and mine.

Today's readings invite us to claim this interconnectedness with Christ and with one another. In the gospel Jesus urges his followers to eat his flesh and drink his blood. The phrase "flesh and blood" is a way of expressing the totality of a person; believers partake wholly in the full being of Christ. At the same time, this language of eating flesh and drinking blood is offensive. The Greek word *tregein*, "eat," in verse 54 is a very graphic one that literally means "to gnaw," or "to munch." Moreover, in other places in the Scriptures, "eater of flesh" is an expression applied to an adversary who is seeking to destroy a person (see Ps 27:2). Drinking blood would be equally abhorrent to Jesus' disciples, as blood is regarded as the life force over which only God has power and is therefore not to be consumed by humans (Gen 9:4; Deut 12:23; Acts 15:20). Eating flesh and drinking blood is also a way of speaking of brutal slaughter (Jer 19:9; 46:10; Ezek 39:17). It is no wonder that some of Jesus' disciples found this saying too difficult and decided not to follow him (Jn 6: 60-66).

The bread of life discourse is immediately followed by a note that Jesus didn't want to go about in Judea because his opponents were looking for an opportunity to kill him. (Jn 7:1). Likewise, the Synoptic Gospels connect Jesus' gift of his flesh and blood to his impending death (Matt 26: 26-29 // Mk 14:22-25//Lk 22:14-23).

This context gives us some insight into the meaning of Jesus' offer of his flesh and blood for us to eat and drink. When his own flesh and blood are about to be devoured in brutal slaughter, he preempts this act by offering it, the whole of his being, to those who believe in his manner of bringing life to the world. Who and what he is cannot be consumed or annihilated by those who would want to inhibit the life-giving forces Jesus has unleashed in the world. When his disciples take in and become all that he is, the life forces he enfleshed continue to be offered for the life of the world.

The interconnectedness of all persons and all life in the body of Christ is not only an abstract concept; it is palpable and visible. One can choose to be a destructive eater of flesh and drinker of blood, or to consume and be consumed by the One whose intent is for the ongoing life of the whole world.

Old and New Testament links

First Reading — Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16

Moses said to the people: ² Remember how Yahweh your God led you for forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, to test you and know your inmost heart-whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³ He humbled you, he made you feel hunger, he fed you with manna which neither you nor your fathers had known, to make you understand that man does not live on bread alone but that man lives on everything that comes from the mouth of Yahweh. ⁴ The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet were not swollen, all those forty years.

¹⁴ Do not become proud of heart. Do not then forget Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery: ¹⁵ who guided you through this vast and dreadful wilderness, a land of fiery serpents, scorpions, thirst; who in this waterless place brought you water from the hardest rock; ¹⁶ who in this wilderness fed you with manna that your fathers had not known.

Responsorial Reading — Ps 147:12-15, 19-20

R: Praise the Lord, Jerusalem, Zion, praise your God

Praise the Lord, Jerusalem, Zion, praise your God:
for strengthening the bars of your gates, for blessing your citizens, (**R**)

For granting you peace on your frontiers, for feeding you on the finest wheat.
He gives an order; his word flashes to earth. (**R**)

He reveals his word to Jacob, his statutes and rulings to Israel:
He never does this for other nations, he never reveals his rulings to them. (**R**)

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

¹⁶ The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ. ¹⁷ The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

787. From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to them, and gave them a share in his mission, joy, and sufferings. (Cf. Mk 1:16-20; 3:13-19; Mt 13:10-17; Lk 10:17-20; 22:28-30) Jesus spoke of a still more intimate communion between him and those who would follow him: "Abide in me, and I in you. . . . I am the vine, you are the branches." (Jn 15:4-5) And he proclaimed a mysterious and real communion between his own body and ours: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." (Jn 6:56)

994. But there is more. Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person: "I am the Resurrection and the life." (Jn 11:25) It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood. (Cf. Jn 5:24-25; 6:40,54) Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life, (Cf. Mk 5:21-42; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11) announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order. He speaks of this unique event as the "sign of Jonah," (Mt 12:39) the sign of the temple: he announces that he will be put to death but rise thereafter on the third day. (Cf. Mk 10:34; Jn 2:19-22)

1355. In the communion, preceded by the Lord's prayer and the breaking of the bread, the faithful receive "the bread of heaven" and "the cup of salvation," the body and blood of Christ who offered himself "for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51)

Because this bread and wine have been made Eucharist ("eucharisted," according to an ancient expression), "we call this food *Eucharist*, and no one may take part in it unless he believes that what we teach is true, has received baptism for the forgiveness of sins and new birth, and lives in keeping with what Christ taught." (St. Justin, Apol. 1, 66,1-2: PG 6, 428)

1384. The Lord addresses an invitation to us, urging us to receive him in the sacrament of the Eucharist: "Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." (Jn 6:53)

1391. *Holy Communion augments our union with Christ.* The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus. Indeed, the Lord said: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." (Jn 6:56) Life in Christ has its foundation in the Eucharistic banquet: "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me." (Jn 6:57)

On the feasts of the Lord, when the faithful receive the Body of the Son, they proclaim to one another the Good News that the first fruits of life have been given, as when the angel said to Mary Magdalene, "Christ is risen!" Now too are life and resurrection conferred on whoever receives Christ.

1524. In addition to the Anointing of the Sick, the Church offers those who are about to leave this life the Eucharist as viaticum. Communion in the body and blood of Christ, received at this moment of "passing over" to the Father, has a particular significance and importance. It is the seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection, according to the words of the Lord: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (Jn 6:54) The sacrament of Christ once dead and now risen, the Eucharist is here the sacrament of passing over from death to life, from this world to the Father. (Cf. Jn 13:1)

Sharing and Discussion

1. "We know eternal life is a gift, but it was purchased at the high cost of the cross. Does thinking about that sacrifice actually change the way you live or feel about your faith today?"
2. 'I am the living bread which has come down from heaven.' Knowing that the Eucharist is the real presence of God, how do you approach Him in that moment, and how do you carry that connection with you once you leave the church?"
3. "In this story, many people left because Jesus said some things that were really hard to accept. Is there anything about the idea of Jesus being the 'living bread' that you personally find difficult or hard to understand?"

Closing Prayer

All: Loving God, you give of yourself for us in the Eucharist. Hear our prayers and nourish our bodies, minds and spirits to do your will. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen