

Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Year A, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16

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

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

John 6:51-58

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Is there a particular reading that appeals to you? Is there a word that engages you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need.

The Word in Liturgy



The reverence for the Lord's presence in the Eucharist dates from the earliest generations of Christians, as is clear from the "bread of life" discourse in John and the meal narratives with eucharistic overtones found in all the Gospels. But it was not until the tenth and eleventh centuries that devotion to the Blessed Sacrament as an object of prayerful adoration developed extensively among the Christian faithful. A feast of the Blessed Sacrament was first celebrated in 1246, and within a hundred years the observance had spread throughout the Christian world. Pope Urban IV commissioned St. Thomas Aquinas in 1264 to compose the formularies for a Mass that he ordered extended to the universal Church. Those texts are still used today as the opening prayer, the prayer over the gifts, and the prayer after communion in the Roman Missal.

Each of today's readings illuminates some aspect of today's feast. Deuteronomy recalls the way in which God fed the people of Israel in the desert with manna, that miraculous food which Christians were later to see as a prefiguration of the Eucharist. In contrast with Exodus 16, however, which presents the gift of manna simply as a miracle of feeding the people, today's passage interprets this event in a more particular way. The manna is to teach Israel that God's Word is the source of life on which she must depend. As Israel relied on manna for life in the desert, so the people must continually depend on the Word of God. The latter portion of this reading is taken from Deuteronomy 8:7-20, which is composed in the style of a hymn, rich in the praise of God "who brought you out" (v. 14), "who led you" (v. 15), "who



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fed you" (v. 16).

Today's pericope from John's Gospel contains the climax of the "bread of life" discourse, and announces a bold promise of eternal life. Nevertheless, the sayings of Jesus contained here are some of the most difficult for his contemporaries to grasp, because the language of eating flesh and drinking blood is as graphic and as shocking as a description of cannibalism would be to us today. The passage has been interpreted variously throughout Christian history, with two main trends: understanding the flesh and blood of Jesus to be his teaching, and the ingestion of them to be the act of believing in what he has revealed; and a eucharistic interpretation, that in consuming the bread and wine of the Eucharist the believer is made one with the Lord himself, who is fully identified with the elements. The latter interpretation is obviously the one most favored by a feast concerning the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. It does not, however, rule out the relevance of faith in the teachings of Jesus for obtaining eternal life, for when believers "take in" the flesh and blood of Christ, they must surely embrace his teachings as well. Again and again, the passage returns to the theme of life, promised through this bread who is Jesus. It surpasses even the gift of manna, for it brings eternal life.

Catholic Doctrine



The Real Presence

On this feast when the Church contemplates the eucharistic banquet of the Lord, we proclaim our belief that "when we eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come in glory" (Roman Missal, Memorial Acclamation, Eucharistic Prayer). As followers of Jesus, we carry out his command to "do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 1:24-25). What we remember is the sacrifice of the Lord which in the Eucharist we offer again to the Father through the gifts of bread and wine through the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of Christ (CCC 1357).

The emphatic proclamation of this awesome mystery is only possible because from the earliest times the Church has experienced in this sacred meal the real presence of Jesus Christ. This means that when we eat this bread and drink this cup, although we taste the fruits of the earth and our human hands (bread and wine), we experience in faith the body and blood of our Lord and Savior who sacrificed himself on our behalf.

We believe that when the Church gathers, Mass is celebrated with the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and within the Eucharist, bread and wine are presented and



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prayed over, the Spirit of God descends and makes those elements into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The Church has insisted from the earliest times that this is the “real presence” of Christ, that is, real in the fullest sense a substantial presence by which Christ, both God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present (CCC 1374). Why? Most especially because Jesus himself promised this and secondarily because the apostles and those who have followed in this Church have experienced it to be so.

