

The Body and Blood of Christ (C)
(Genesis 14:18-20 / Luke 9:11-17)
19.06.2022
All & Together

In our Gospel Reading, there is a word which is repeated 3 times. It is the three letters word “all.”

The challenging power of this very small word is not negligible. As a Christian community gathered together for the celebration of the Eucharist, we have to remember that the Sacrament of the Eucharist is supposed to be for all, not just for a particular group of people, not for an elite, not only for the pure and righteous. The Gospel tells us that all those who followed Jesus ate as much as they wanted. The Eucharist is food for all. It is a food we need in order to be strengthened for the journey, for the daily challenges and for the great decisions we face in life.

The Sacrament is given to us precisely because, as St Paul reminds us, we are poor (cf. 2 Co 6:10) and we have not yet reached the goal (cf. Phil 3:12). The Sacrament is a medicine to heal us who are sick (cf. Mk 2:17) not a reward to recompense our achievements.

The fact that we can celebrate and receive the Sacrament should not make us forget that many fellow Catholics and Christians are not, for one reason or another, allowed to receive it. It would be wrong for us to be satisfied with this situation, to sit comfortably with the blessing bestowed upon us, knowing that the same blessing is denied to some of our brothers and sisters. In some way, we must feel their pain, and that should inspire us to pray and work for the day when all will be able to eat the one bread and drink at the one cup.

As Catholics, we have to be careful. Our communion to the Body and Blood of Christ should not foster a spirit of pride within us. We should not feel superior to those who cannot receive the Sacrament in our Church. On the contrary, the Sacrament should spur us on to become humbler, more loving and caring in others' regard.

The Eucharist should make us more Christlike, generous servants of all our brothers and sisters in humanity. Always grateful for the gracious gift of God we should remember that Christ “died for all” (2 Co 5:15) in order “to gather into one all the dispersed children of God” (Jn 11:52).

The other aspect which appears very clearly in our Gospel reading is that while the disciples want to disperse the crowd, Jesus wants them all to remain together. Here again Jesus challenges us; he challenges our individualistic mentality. We are not supposed to receive the Sacrament on our own but all together. The Eucharistic celebration is not a private event which concerns just Jesus and me. The Eucharistic celebration is not simply an intimate face to face with the Lord but a transformative event which invites us into a real engagement with and a real presence to one another. It is together, as members of the one Body of Christ that we celebrate and receive the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ.

The togetherness that we experience in the sacramental celebration is not to be confused with sameness, or with the fact that we agree on everything or have the same political or spiritual inclinations. In our diversity, we are united by Jesus Christ, gathered together by his Spirit who makes us all children of the one Father.

The possibility to follow our celebration by internet has been a great help for many during the successive lockdowns and it is still for those who, for health reasons, cannot be present physically in a church building.

That being said, we have to be careful because we are made for communion and, since we are not angels, we are made for a communion which expresses itself by being physically, really present to one another. It is in this context that the Sacrament of the Eucharist takes its full meaning, in the communal celebration of men and women who, like in the primitive Christian community, are “devoted to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Ac 2:42).

The end of our Gospel reading is quite encouraging. The evangelist informs us that after “they all ate as much as they wanted”, “the scraps remaining were collected” and “filled twelve baskets.”

This piece of information speaks of the generosity of Christ. There are no limits to his giving, to his self-giving to us. Christ's generosity is revealed perfectly in his death and resurrection, and in the gift of his Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Love cannot be stingy otherwise it is not true love.

Today as we give thanks for the Sacrament of God's love for us, we are called along with our Christian communities and Churches to become all the more generous. Generous in mind and heart, generous with what we have and who we are, generous in our commitment to pray and to work for the growth of the Kingdom of unity, reconciliation, and peace in our communities and countries. To be generous is the best way for us to honour the Sacrament, because in becoming generous we become what we receive: God himself who is “generosity in person” (Benedict XVI, *Hom.* 17.10.2010).