

## Food for the Journey

Jesus tells the Jewish people: 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in them...This is the bread that came down from heaven, not that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.'

This Sunday, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ; that great and central mystery of our faith. The priest holds his hands over the bread and wine on the altar and, invoking the power of the Holy Spirit, transforms it into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ so that we can follow His command to eat. What transpires is truly a mystery; beyond our limited ability to comprehend. We take it on faith.

In this time of pandemic when we have not been able to attend the Mass, this is what we miss the most. We can watch Cardinal Collins celebrate the Eucharist on television. We can watch him elevate the host and the chalice at the altar, but we cannot physically partake of the Eucharistic meal.

It is said that absence makes the heart grow fonder. Perhaps the unforeseen blessing of the pandemic will be our increased love of the Eucharist.

In exhorting people to increase their reverence for the Holy Eucharist, St. John Chrysostom said this in the 4<sup>th</sup> century:

*The wise men paid homage to Christ's body even when it was lying in a manger. Foreigners who did not worship the true God left their homes and their native land, set out on a long journey, and on reaching its end, worshipped in great fear and trembling. They only saw Christ in a manger, they saw nothing of what you now see, and yet they approached him with profound awe and reverence. You see him, not in a manger but on an altar, not carried by a woman but offered by a priest; and you see the Spirit bountifully poured out upon the offerings of bread and wine. Unlike the wise men, you do not merely see Christ's body: you know his power as well, and the whole divine plan for our salvation. Having been carefully instructed, you are ignorant of none of the marvels he has performed. Let us then awaken in ourselves a feeling of awe and let us show a far greater reverence than did those foreigners...*

St. John Chrysostom spoke these words to his people in the 4<sup>th</sup> century but they are no less relevant to us today. We should allow him to speak directly to us and cause us to increase our reverence for the Body and Blood of Jesus on the altar.

God has always fed His people. He fed the Israelites with manna in the desert. He provided wine of the best quality at the wedding in Cana. He fed thousands of

people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. He fed the disciples breakfast on the shore of the Sea of Galilee after they had been fishing all night.

Soon we will be able to attend Mass at church. With renewed faith, let us enter then into the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine. Let us ask God to help us to suspend our unbelief so that we may truly encounter Jesus with wonder and awe just as the wise men worshipped the baby Jesus in the manger. Let us ask God to continue to feed us as He has always done for His people.