

## Corpus Christi - C

One of the things that Catholic Christianity requires is that we become accustomed to being able to see different levels of meaning in the teachings and actions of the Church.

The Feast of Corpus Christi is a perfect example. In an earlier time this was the day that Catholics processed through the streets with the Blessed Sacrament, proclaiming our faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

While that is a laudable custom, so long as it does not become triumphalistic, by no means does it exhaust the meaning inherent in what we celebrate at Mass.

Today's Gospel, for example, has Eucharistic overtones, even though there is no mention of Jesus saying "This is my body, this is my blood."

What Jesus does do is he takes the gifts given to him, in this case loaves and fishes, blesses them, breaks them, and gives them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

All present are meant to have their fill, and they do.

Paul, in recalling to the Corinthian community what had been handed on to him, reminds them that, on the night that he was handed over, Jesus took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that

is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

One of the aspects that gets a bit overlooked in the traditional celebrations of the Corpus Christi is the part about breaking and sharing. It is the blessed, broken and shared bread that is the body of Christ. Those are essential elements of what it means to fully celebrate the Eucharist.

Consecration is the beginning, but Eucharist is completed in the breaking and sharing of what has been consecrated.

How does that take place? At Mass we have the communion rite. While everyone prays or sings the Lamb of God, the priest is breaking the host and dividing it into the containers for distribution.

Then, he and the other disciples, the Eucharistic ministers in this case, distribute it to the faithful.

At that point, the Body of Christ reaches a fuller expression than was the case when the host was consecrated but still resting on the altar. It resides in the hearts of the faithful, for whom it was intended.

The Eucharist is meant to be put into action, first in the hearts of the faithful, and then, through them (us), into the life of the world.

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When we leave Church, we leave with a Eucharistic quality about us. We have been given what we need to be instruments of Christ's presence in the world.

What we do is fueled and informed by what occurs at the Eucharistic celebration.

When that works properly people notice.

The saint and social activist Dorothy Day was first attracted to the church when she saw that the rich and the poor knelt side by side at Mass.

Everyone was equal at the Eucharist.

We are Eucharistic when our actions do justice to that basic equality wherever we are. In the soup kitchen this is explicit. We don't do a needs test before deciding whether someone coming for lunch deserves it or not.

We simply recognize their basic human right to adequate food, and provide what we can in that regard.

There's freedom in such simplicity. We are freed from having to pass judgment based on inadequate knowledge of their situation and can simply relate to them as brother or sister in the one human family.

You think people don't notice that? That's one of the primary reasons people keep coming back and why

they want to give back according to their means.

The soup kitchen is just one example of how this occurs in the world

Just as Jesus asked the disciples to distribute the bread and fish, he asks us to distribute ourselves as well as the goods of the earth so that all may be fed, housed, clothed, and rescued from chaos into peace.

If we do this, the world will be realigned to God's will and the original design of Creation.

On Holy Thursday we celebrated the institution of the Eucharist in relation to the Passover of Jesus.

Today's feast focuses more on Eucharist as an ongoing reality in the Church.

We repeat the ancient gestures and words of the new covenant to make present the hidden reality of Christ's redemptive presence among us who gather in faith, and commit ourselves to making that hidden reality present in our encounter with all who are in need.