

Deuteronomy 8:2-3,
14b-16a

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

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

John 6:51-58



REFLECTION

There are so many movies whose plotlines center around a character's quest for immortality. There are superheroes, supervillains, mythical creatures, and lab experiments gone wrong . . . or right. The character must decide—is the gift worth the price that must be paid? Is it a blessing or a curse? Will the gift remain or is it short-term?

Of course, the Christian concept of our heavenly eternal life is different than the superhero version, but the crowds who have gathered to hear Jesus' teaching might have been asking themselves similar questions when they heard Jesus say, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day" (John 6:54). Understandably, they were also confused at Jesus' incredible claim. It seems outlandish and impossible. Is what he is promising worth it? Later in the Gospel passage (not included in today's reading) we hear that some of his disciples walked away because they couldn't accept it (John 6:66).

As Catholics, we might take Jesus' words for granted. We have heard this story before and we believe that Jesus gives us his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. We can receive Communion daily, if we choose to. It becomes routine to receive Communion

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How could this Gospel reading help you explain the Eucharist to a non-Catholic?
- ❖ How do the lives of the saints give us an example of the balance between the cost of discipleship and God's gift of eternal life?

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

June 11, 2023

and we might not think of the enormous cost Jesus paid, nor the cost of our own discipleship. Yet, every time we receive Communion, we have the opportunity to say yes to the gift of eternal life by our "Amen."

ACTION

Take some time this week to reflect on the cost of discipleship and the gift of eternal life that Christ offers us in the Eucharist. Have you ever had to defend your faith and beliefs against a culture that rejects them? Have you lost relationships with friends or family members because you have persevered in your belief and Christlike actions? How does God's promise of eternal life sustain you through these times?

"Our labor here is brief,
but the reward is eternal."

—St. Clare of Assisi



June 11, 2023

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (CORPUS CHRISTI)

LECTIONARY #167A

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a

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

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Sequence: *Lauda Sion*

John 6:51-58

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Today's reading comes from a longer section in John's Gospel known as the "Bread of Life discourse." At the beginning of John 6, Jesus multiplies the bread and fish. The crowd, possibly looking for another sign, follows Jesus and struggles to understand his teaching. It is in this context that Jesus tells them that he is the bread of life, and whoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood will have eternal life. As the Israelites were provided the bread called manna in their desert wandering, Jesus now offers himself as the bread of the journey. Catholics interpret this verse literally, as Jesus meant it. Although Jesus knows this is hard to hear, he does not go back on what he says and as a result many who had gathered left him.

Q FOCUS: *The Real Presence of Christ is in the Eucharist. It is a great gift to us.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

While the church remains in Ordinary Time, this Sunday we celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ. Established in the thirteenth century, this feast focuses on the gift of the Eucharist. Usually marked by Eucharistic processions and adoration, this is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate Christ in the context of community. This week the

church remembers St. Anthony of Padua (June 13). St. Anthony is a popular Franciscan saint, often associated with finding lost things. Even more than that, he is a Doctor of the Church because of his teachings and the way his preaching was influential in converting people to the faith. The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated on Friday (June 16).

Church Teaching Connection

"In the humble signs of bread and wine, changed into his body and blood, Christ walks beside us as our strength and our food for the journey, and he enables us to become, for everyone, witnesses of hope. If, in the presence of this mystery, reason experiences its limits, the heart, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, clearly sees the response that is demanded, and bows low in adoration and unbounded love" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 62).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 6:51-58

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said to the Jewish crowds: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

- ▶ Can you recall the best meal you ever ate? What was it like? What did you have? Who was with you?
- ▶ What are your favorite foods?

Many of us can recall special meals we've eaten and what they have meant to us. But do you remember every meal you ever ate? Do you remember what you had for dinner three Tuesdays ago? Some meals are special and we remember, while some meals don't make such an impact. Nevertheless, they all serve the purpose of nourishing us and giving us the sustenance we need to get to this moment today.

The Eucharist is a special meal that the Church shares at Christ's command and invitation. In it we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ.

▶ Do you remember any special times you have received the Eucharist?

Maybe it was during your first Communion or at your confirmation. Maybe there was a particularly meaningful Eucharistic celebration in connection with a funeral or a wedding. Perhaps it was on a retreat or at a time when you felt close to God.

You might remember particular instances of receiving the Eucharist, but do you recall every Eucharist you have ever received? Probably not. But just like each meal you have had, every Eucharist has brought you to this moment today. You may not have gotten here without it.

Jesus tells the crowds that he is the living bread from heaven and that they must eat this bread if they want life. The reaction of the crowd is what we might expect; they were confused. Jesus is bread? That can't be! He's the son of Mary and Joseph! Shortly after this passage in John's Gospel, the crowd abandons Jesus. They could not understand his teaching. It was too hard. How did Jesus react? He let them leave. He did not chase after them. He did not say, "I didn't mean it! I'm just speaking metaphorically! It's just a symbol. I'm not bread to eat. Come back!" He knew it was a hard teaching because it was so different from what they were expecting of the messiah. But he held firm; he knew he was the bread of life being offered for all.

- ▶ How do you react when you hear something that is hard to understand or difficult to believe? What are some ways that you can be more open to trying to understand these situations?

Bread is a common thing, present in so many cultures around the world. It is made up of common ingredients. It is humble, simple, and accessible. So is Jesus. Jesus is humble, simple, and accessible. He is found in the common, everyday moments of our lives. But he is heavenly, too. He makes the ordinary things extraordinary.

The Eucharist is a great gift of God. When we receive it, we receive him. We partake of God. He becomes part of us, for that time he is in us. There is no time a person can be closer to God than when we receive this precious gift. Yes, we have the Scriptures where we can read the Word of God. Yes, we have the other sacraments as well. But the Eucharist is the

“source and summit” of our faith (see *Lumen gentium*, 11). In the Eucharist we become a living temple of God on earth. What a gift!

Truly, the Eucharist is the best meal we could possibly eat. Not because it tastes the best, but because it is Jesus, who dwells with us and leads us to eternal life.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 202.

When we receive the Eucharist, we receive Jesus, body, blood, soul, and divinity.

Every time we have received the Eucharist has given us the grace to arrive at this moment today.

Jesus is close to us every day, making the ordinary extraordinary.

Act on the Word

Eucharistic Adoration

For this activity, you will need to coordinate with your parish priest or liturgical coordinator to arrange to for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and the space in which this will occur. You will also want to work with them to obtain prayer resources to help the teens understand what is happening and also what Eucharistic adoration is—the parish might already have these resources available. Additionally, you will need candles and music.

Adoration is a wonderful and much needed experience for young people. This activity will help foster a sense of reverence for the Body of Christ and provide the teens an opportunity to try this type of prayer.

Before beginning the time of prayer, spend a few minutes talking about what Eucharistic adoration is, why it is beneficial to our Christian life, and how it draws us back to our participation in the sacrament at Mass. Also talk about how the prayer time will be structured and point out any prayers that will be used during the time. This activity may be a challenge as

some young people may struggle with silence. Give physical and spiritual space for the participants to settle.

The experience of adoration can be supplemented by praise and worship music, traditional hymns, or instrumental music, either live or recorded. There should be periods of silence, periods of instrumental music, and sung reflective music.

You may want to consider having a youth “witness” talk before or during the adoration time. The youth “witness” could share personal testimony of how Jesus has affected their lives or how the Eucharist has played a role in their life. If having a youth speak, make sure to preview the talk before they share it with the wider group.

Exposure to Jesus changes lives. Allow Jesus to work through adoration. Encourage the participants to fully participate as they are able.

Closing Prayer

Loving God,

in the sacrament of the Body and Blood

of your Son,

we are nourished with eternal life.

Grant that we may always cherish

this wonderful gift of divine grace

and come, one day,

to enjoy the eternal banquet of

your kingdom

with Jesus Christ our Lord,

who lives and reigns with you

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.