

Sunday mass is the most important event of the week. It is the source and summit of everything we do. We come to mass weekly because at the Last Supper Jesus took bread and wine, gave thanks to God, and handed them to his disciples, saying, "This is my body; this is my blood." Then he said, "Do this in memory of me." Jesus commanded it, so we do it.

We believe Jesus is truly present in the eucharist; we believe that we eat and drink his body and blood. Today's feast celebrates this belief. It used to be called Corpus Christi, the Latin words for "the body of Christ." Back then we had a separate feast of the most precious blood of Christ. The epistle for that day survives as the second reading for today's mass. Jesus is just as present under the form of bread as he is under the form of wine, so the two days are now joined as the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

Why do you come to mass? Most Catholics will answer, "To receive communion," but there are other important reasons why we gather. The word eucharist means "thanksgiving", so one reason for mass is to give thanks to God for all the blessings we have received. We gather on Sundays because that is the day Jesus rose from the dead. Just by being here today, we proclaim our faith in the resurrection. We come together – because our discipleship is not just between each one of us and Christ, but between all of us and Christ. Sunday mass forms us as a community, so that as a community we give thanks to God and go forth to serve others and to tell the world about Christ. Mass is not about what we get out of it, but what God gets out of it, and what the world gets out of it.

Here are a few reminders about Sunday mass. Come every week. Come prepared; say prayers at home every day – at meals, waking up or going to bed. Include in those prayers the scriptures you will hear at mass on Sunday; this will open your ears to the readings, the homily and the music. Fast from food and drink one hour before communion; that includes gum. Dress appropriately. Come early to greet other people and prepare yourself for mass. Turn off your cell phones. You might even leave your watch at home to minimize distractions while you are here. Sing the songs and make the responses. If you think you don't sing well, please pick up the hymnal, mouth the words of the songs, and join in the prayer of the community; if you don't pick up a hymnal, you diminish everyone's experience of common prayer. When the lector is reading or the cantor is singing verses, listen attentively. Use the periods of silence to reflect on the readings and to thank God for the eucharist. Stay for the end of mass. If you leave mass after communion, you are not fulfilling part of your responsibility here. Stay to thank God for the eucharist, to hear the announcements of parish activities in the coming week, and to be dismissed with your brothers and sisters in Christ as a sign that you go into the world not alone – but with them to proclaim your faith by word and deed. Then, come again next week so we can do it all over again.

On this Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, when we thank God for the gift of the eucharist, let us treasure this gift enough to prepare for it, celebrate it, and live it.