

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Today the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops launches a three-year eucharistic revival. Its mission is “to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.” The revival envisions “a movement of Catholics across the United States, healed, converted, formed, and unified by an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist—and sent out in mission “for the life of the world.” The first year features events in every diocese, the second year encourages parish events, and the third year will bring a national eucharistic conference to Indianapolis—all to stir up the faith of Catholics in the eucharistic presence of Jesus Christ.

The revival begins as we observe the Sunday of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, popularly called Corpus Christi. On this day we meditate on the meaning of the Eucharist and praise God for this gift. The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks of this belief (1413): “Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity.” At the Mass, Christ becomes truly present in the Eucharist; we eat his Body and drink his Blood in holy communion.

This weekend Bishop Johnston is leading two processions with the Blessed Sacrament, one through the streets of Kansas City and the other in St. Joseph. Our annual diocesan eucharistic conference comes in September. Inspirational videos are already available on the diocesan web site.

Among the images from our scriptures today is the mysterious figure Melchizedek. The Book of Genesis introduces him, and he reappears in the Book of Psalms and in the Letter to the Hebrews. In today’s reading from Genesis, Melchizedek praises God. Abram’s enemies had captured his nephew Lot and his people, and had stolen all their possessions. Abram mustered 318 soldiers, pursued the enemy, won the battle, rescued Lot, and recovered the stolen goods. Then come these verses in which Melchizedek blessed Abram and blessed God. To us Christians, Melchizedek foreshadows Jesus because he is king of a place called “Peace”, he is a priest who takes bread and wine to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, he appears out of nowhere and disappears after these few verses, preparing us for the mysterious incarnation and ascension of Jesus. Entering the bible’s very first book, Melchizedek shows how the coming of Christ and the gift of the Eucharist were in the mind of God from the beginning. When we go through daily battles, struggling against forces of evil around us or within us, we rely upon Christ to keep us from capture. His presence is never more real than it is in the Eucharist. Like Melchizedek, we use bread and wine to thank God for victory.

The opening of this eucharistic revival invites each of us to appreciate the Eucharist anew. Above all, it should remind us of the importance of participating in weekly Mass and communion. If for some reason you desire to receive communion but cannot, this would be a good year to see if that can be remedied. Throughout the year you may gather with others to adore the Blessed Sacrament here and around the diocese. This practice will deepen your devotion to the Eucharist as you worship the one who sacrificed himself for the life of the world. If you feel spiritually weary, revival comes from Christ.

Sunday, June 19, 2022