

The Body and Blood of Christ:
that's what it's all about for us

It goes all the way back to our ancestors in the faith, the Jews,
as we heard in today's first scripture.

A primitive ritual:
an animal sacrificed, its blood splashed on an altar,
the people washed in the blood.

On one night in Egypt the animal was a lamb, the Passover lamb,
a lamb who became a meal for the chosen people,
a lamb whose blood they smeared on their doors
as a sign that the angel of death Pass Over the homes so marked,
thus delivering the chosen people
through the body and blood of the sacrificed lamb of God.

Then, one night in Jerusalem, around Passover time,
Jesus had his friends prepare the Passover meal in an upper room.
There, Jesus announced that he himself was the lamb,
the victim, the sacrifice,
the one whose blood would be spilled on the altar of the cross.

This, he told his friends, was the sacrifice of the new covenant
which they would share by blessing, breaking and sharing *bread*
which Jesus told them *was his body*;
by blessing and sharing the *cup of thanksgiving*
which Jesus told them *was the cup of his blood*.

A new sacrifice; a new victim; a new covenant; a new Passover meal:
bread and wine become his Body and Blood.

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Ever since that meal in the upper room, on the night before he died,
Christians have gathered to do what Jesus told them to do
in his memory.

It's why we have gathered here this morning:
to do what Jesus told us to do in thanksgiving
and in memory of him.

And in our remembering, in our prayer, by the power of the Spirit,
our simple gifts of thanksgiving, bread and wine,
become the Body and Blood of Christ.

Our baptism, as important as it is,
is really the sacrament that invites us, ultimately,
to the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

And it is at the Eucharist that we gather when we bid farewell
to brothers and sisters who have died.

We bring our beloved dead to the table of Eucharist,
to this place between the font that promised eternal life
and the altar that nourished human life,

as a reminder for us that this altar
prepares us for a table in heaven
where the feasting and the joy have no end,
where the peace is forever.

What was the center of our lives when we knew ourselves
as the people of St. Bernard's Parish
and the people of Our Lady's Parish?

The Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist!

What is the center of our lives now that we know ourselves
as the people of Holy Family Parish?

The Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist!

That's what it's all about for us ...

And this table of Eucharist is also the table of God's justice.

The inclusivity of this table,
the invitation of this table especially to the poor and marginalized,
and the universal embrace of God's saving love
are precisely what this table signifies.

We cannot allow ourselves the privilege of eating the Lord's Supper
if we are not hard about the work of feeding his brothers and sisters
who have nothing to eat at all,
who have, in so many ways,
been denied a seat at the table of humankind's bounty.

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An ancient covenant made new in Jesus...
an ancient sacrifice made simple...
an ancient food made ever fresh
by the breath God's Holy Spirit...

We do this morning what Christians have done for some 2,000 years:
we come to celebrate the Lord's Supper
and to be nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ.

May the sacrament receive
renew the Lord's covenant within and among us
and make us grateful for the life that is ours

in the Body and Blood of Christ,
because for us that's what it's all about...

Rev. Austin Fleming