

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

June 19th, 2022

Reading I – Genesis 14:18-20

In those days, Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words:

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
the creator of heaven and earth;
and blessed be God Most High,
who delivered your foes into your hand."

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Gn 14:18–20 In this reading that, in its own way, interpretively captures the whole weekend that celebrates the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. We will see that all three readings are selected because they elaborate from their own perspective of what the ritual of sharing a meal of bread and wine meant in their time. For a little background in this “breaking bread” ceremony in the book of Genesis, one should remember that, even though many of the Old Testament moments of bread and wine are interpreted as precursors to the Eucharist today (and it is ok to do so), I think it is healthy to acknowledge one of the main reasons Genesis was told. Genesis in origin of meaning from its Hebrew translation is called bereshit (in the beginning). Essentially this title describes that this book, through poetic devices, re-tells the development of two big topics, which are how the universe (and all that is in it) is coming into being and what it took for the Israelite community to form and be called by God through the patriarchs.

Specifically looking towards the verses we have today, we are looking in on one of the narratives of the patriarchs, Abraham (at this moment he is still called Abram). At this moment in time, Abram has just ended his struggle with the kings who not only inhabited the land that was promised. They had also captured his nephew Lot. After doing what was thought impossible (defeating the antagonist kings), the king of Salem, Melchizedek, who also functions as a priest to the God Most High (Heb=El Elyon) invites Abram to a meal ceremony which the gifts of bread and wine are used as symbols. In one view, they are given to communicate the power that Abram will receive from this blessing. In another point of view, they can also denote (since the ritual was done during a communal meal), as a sign of peace between Salem and Abram’s mighty military force. From both vantage points, from the “olive branch” that Melchizedek extends, Abram response is a positive one. One in which, from all the bounty he

acquired and blessings and kinship he has received, he gives ten percent of all that he has.

Comments/Questions: For me, I often observe that, as a whole human community today, it is a lot easier for others to receive gifts, then it is to give something in return (even if it is not asked). In this story today, regardless of how a person gets to a moment of blessing or abundance, we are reminded that despite if the offering is required or not. We are to share the wealth or give back to the community at large. As a whole human community, do we think we are doing well with our ability to be generous and offer a little bit of what we have to the community? If not, what do you think will help guide people on the path to being generous?

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 110:1, 2, 3, 4

R (4b) You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

The LORD said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand
till I make your enemies your footstool."

R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

The scepter of your power the LORD will stretch forth from Zion:
"Rule in the midst of your enemies."

R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

"Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendor;
before the daystar, like the dew, I have begotten you."

R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

The LORD has sworn, and he will not repent:

"You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

Reading II – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Brothers and sisters:

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you,
that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over,
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."

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."
For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 – In our reading today we hear one of the first summaries of the Eucharistic institution. Paul is writing to the Christian community in Corinth because of the major divisions between the wealthy and

poor. The poor Christians in Corinth were often left out of the celebration of the Eucharist because the celebration was done around the time the poor Christians were about to start work.

A major theme in this letter that Paul stresses is about unity (as we hear about the Body of Christ analogy in chapter 12). So, when Paul makes the statement “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes,” Paul is holding the Christians in Corinth accountable for their less than welcoming attitude. He is saying *how* they celebrate the Eucharist makes a big statement. In turn, how they celebrate includes who is a part of the celebration. So, if the rich Christian community celebrates the Eucharist without the full community (rich and poor), they bring judgment upon themselves (1 Corinthians 11:30).

Questions/Comments: In the Synod on Synodality, one special topic is listening. Listening, in the eyes of Pope Francis, includes asking the question who is part of the conversation and who is *not* part of the conversation. Here are some questions from this section that we can talk about: How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits our listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries? How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated? What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own? What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

Gospel – Luke 9:11b-17

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God,
and he healed those who needed to be cured.
As the day was drawing to a close,
the Twelve approached him and said,
"Dismiss the crowd
so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms
and find lodging and provisions;
for we are in a deserted place here."
He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves."
They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have,
unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people."
Now the men there numbered about five thousand.
Then he said to his disciples,
"Have them sit down in groups of about fifty."
They did so and made them all sit down.
Then taking the five loaves and the two fish,
and looking up to heaven,

he said the blessing over them, broke them,
and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.
They all ate and were satisfied.
And when the leftover fragments were picked up,
they filled twelve wicker baskets.

Luke 9:11b-17. In today's passage from Luke, we join Jesus, the prophet sent by God, as he carries out his ministry, which includes teaching people about the kingdom of God and touching those who need to be cured with the healing power of God. As the day draws to a close, the Twelve advise him to dismiss the sizable crowd so they can go to the villages and farms to find food and lodging. Jesus has other plans, however, and he tells them to feed the people themselves. Given their meagre fives loaves and two fish, they reply that they would have to go and buy food to feed so many people (5,000 just counting the men)! Jesus tells his disciples to get them to sit down in groups of about fifty. Then, as the head of a Jewish family would do before a meal, Jesus says the "meal prayer" and starts breaking the loaves and has his disciples start distributing them. Amazingly they feed everyone enough to satisfy them, and even have some left over!

This feeding of the multitude story is found not only in the three synoptic gospels, but in John as well. This multiple attestation is one of the criteria that John P. Meier* includes to determine the historicity of different events in the life of Jesus. While Matthew and Luke obviously rely on the gospel of Mark as their source for their telling their own version of Jesus' story, there are other sources as well. Meier believes that all the gospel writers had access to another source as well. This "feeding story" is categorized as one of Jesus' "nature miracles." Others would include, calming the storm, walking on water, and the miraculous catch of fish. Early Christians reading this story would immediately connect it to their celebration of the Eucharist in which Jesus continues to "feed his people."

Questions/Comments: A recent reflection by Richard Rohr, quotes the mystics who see the whole world as the body of Christ (Rohr speaks of the "cosmic" Christ). These mystics suggest that if we respect his presence in the Eucharist, that should carry over into how we treat (reverence) the earth as well as other people. While we have spent considerable time discussing that a relationship with Jesus calls us to a sensitivity to the people we are surrounded with every day, I ask that we consider the following: It seems that St. Francis of Assisi had an awareness of the presence of Christ in all of creation and a sensitivity to all creatures. Pope Francis reminds us that we ought to take better care of the earth. Do we see this as part of our lives as disciples? What are some practical ways to do this?

*John Meier has five volumes out entitled, **A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus**. His treatment of Miracles is found in "Volume Two: Mentor, Message and Miracles."