

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Cycle B

Exodus 24:3-8

Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16, 17-18

Hebrews 9:11-15

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

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If Jesus Christ is really “God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God” (and he is), and if he is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist (and he is), and if for millennia the Church has been faithful to Christ’s instruction to “do this in memory of me” (and we mostly have been), we would expect that the people who emerged at the end of those millennia of faithful celebration of the Blessed Sacrament would be profoundly affected as a result. We would expect that so many centuries of having Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist as the “source and summit” of their lives would have shaped them in characteristic ways (and so it has). As early as the second century, St. Irenaeus was writing that “Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking.” So, the Eucharist was already determining the way Christians thought (as well it should). But that’s not the half of it! The Eucharist shapes not only how we think, but how we see and how we experience the world.

The idea is that the Catholic conviction that we regularly encounter Christ through our senses in the bread and wine of the Eucharist has accustomed us to expect to encounter him by means of our senses in the material world in any number of other ways. It has caused us to move through our lives attentive to the possibility that any encounter with anyone or anything could be an occasion of God’s Grace. It is for this

reason that we are quintessentially the Christians of the senses. It's why we have stained glass windows, church bells, Gregorian chant, incense, miraculous medals, holy water, holy cards and hot cross buns. The list could be extended indefinitely. This special Catholic quality is usually referred to as 'sacramental imagination.'

This Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ affords us the opportunity to reflect on our own relationship to the Sacrament that has shaped us as a people. How might we grow closer to the sacrament that is the source and summit of our lives, and give our sacramental imaginations full reign?