

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

Genesis 14:18-20

Psalm 110:1, 2, 3, 4

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Luke 9:11B-17

Rev. Charles B. Gordon, C.S.C.

The Garaventa Center

The University of Portland

At Masses in England, a Hail Mary is prayed at the end of the Prayers of the Faithful, or “Bidding Prayers,” as they are called over there. So, after the prayer for the pope and the prayer for the nation and the prayers for other intentions, the priest concludes by saying something like, “Uniting our prayers and praises with those of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us say together,” and then a Hail Mary is recited. Years ago, I asked an older English priest about the origins of this practice. He told me that in the years after Vatican II, it seemed as if all sorts of traditional prayers and devotions were disappearing entirely, and that only the Mass would be left. Some feared that the Hail Mary would be forgotten as well. So, in order to prevent this from happening, the English bishops found a place for the Hail Mary in the Mass.

Whether or not the priest’s explanation is historically accurate, it does reveal a characteristically Catholic instinct, namely, if something is precious to you, and you want it to last, bring it to the Eucharist. For, in a world characterized by continual change, in which whatever else that is beautiful diminishes and ebbs away, the one saving Passion of our lord, Jesus Christ, made present in the Eucharist, remains, entrusted to us until the day when the God who is Love will be all in all. (1 Cor 15:28). It is this consummate divine gift that we celebrate on this Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

And every day, as a people, we continue to bring what is precious to us to the Eucharist – in wedding masses and funeral masses, in First Communions and viatica, in school masses and Communion breakfasts, in red masses and white masses and blue masses. Everything that is precious, everything possessed of mortal beauty, takes its place at the one table – at the foot of the one Cross.

And what we do as a Church, we do as individuals. We bring to the Eucharist the people who are closest to us, whether in person or in our hearts. There, with trust that endures amidst our fears, we bring all our love, all our hope, all our joy to the Love who was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.