



Close Quarters

Read: John 6:51-59

Today marks the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, also known as Corpus Christi. The feast marks the Church's celebration of the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Catholic faith. So what is the Eucharist?

The Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine. In the Eucharist bread "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained*" (CCC 1374).

The foundation for much of the Church's Eucharistic theology comes from the gospel. Here Jesus states that he is the living bread, and the bread that he gives us is his very flesh. He also tells his audience that his "flesh is true food". In Greek the term for flesh is *sarx*, which translated means physical body. Jesus would again say these very words at the Last Supper, "take and eat, this is my body" (Matt. 26:26). Jesus is stating that the bread we receive at mass is literally his body under the appearance of bread (Luke 22:19).

Therefore, when we receive the Eucharist at mass, we become "one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). The Eucharist takes us out of ourselves and unites us to Jesus, so that we can say, with St. Paul, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). In a very real and literal way we are made anew, and share in the divine life of Jesus.

In Jesus, God himself has taken flesh, and has remained with us in the mystery of the Eucharist, in our hands and in our hearts. Deuteronomy 4:7 jubilantly proclaims, "What great nation is there that has a god so near to them as the Lord our God is to us?" For in the Eucharist, God is so near to us that he can be no closer. What a gift we have been given.