

Readings for Today: Deuteronomy 8: 2, 3, 14 – 16; Psalm 147: 12 – 15, 19 and 20; 1 Corinthians 10: 16 & 17; John 6: 51 – 58.

Today's celebration of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ is, like Trinity Sunday, a late-comer to the Calendar. It was instituted to give the faithful an opportunity to celebrate the Blessed Sacrament with thanksgiving and joy, which the shadow of the Lord's Passion made impossible on Maundy Thursday.

The discourse on the Bread of Life, from which today's Gospel Reading is taken, compares the manna given to the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings to the food with which Christ feeds his people. In today's reading from Deuteronomy Moses tells the people to remember the goodness of God towards them – goodness symbolized by the manna, the daily bread which sustained them throughout their journey.

The brief reading from Paul's letter to the Corinthians is actually an 'aside' in the apostle's argument against sharing in food offered in pagan sacrifices. This makes it all the more powerful a witness to the place of the Blessed Sacrament in the life of the Church. Paul is writing less than thirty years after the Last Supper, and he can take it for granted that the Corinthian Christians know that in the *one loaf* and the *blessing-cup* they are in *communion* with *the body* and *the blood of Christ*, and as a result *form a single body*.

The Eucharist, in which we, like the Corinthians and all the generations of Christians since, make communion in the Body and Blood of Christ, is creative of the Church. It is this meal, in which Christ feeds us with his flesh and blood, that makes us what we eat. Receiving the sacramental body of Christ makes us the mystical body, the Church. Receiving the sacramental blood of Christ unites us with his sacrificial death.

*The hymns often sung on this day, and traditionally ascribed to the theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas, include the Office Hymns **Pange Lingua & Verbum Supernum**, the hymn **Adoro Te Devote**, and the Sequence **Lauda Sion Salvatorem** [NEH 268, 269, 308 & 521]. In these or other translations they would all be of use in deepening our appreciation of the Blessed Sacrament at a time when many of us are unable to be physically present at the Eucharist.*