

Today, the second Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate a second solemnity which marks our return to Ordinary Time in the church's year. We celebrate the great feast of 'The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ'.

As we all know only too well, last year the unthinkable happened. We were unable to receive Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ, for months – including over Holy Week, Easter and today's feast. We were unable to bring Holy Communion to the sick and housebound and those in hospital or care homes. The great gift that Christ himself gave us to strengthen and support us, was not available in the same way. But God uses these situations to wake us up, to prompt us to know and love him, and to make him a real part of our lives if that is what we choose.

The effects of the pandemic, and this feast, encourages us to stop and reflect on the teaching of the very 'real presence' of Christ that we receive in Holy Communion, that we are now able to receive once again.

It is impossible for us to understand, 'or perhaps even comprehend', the incredible nature of what actually happens at every Mass, just as it would have been for the disciples at the very first time at the Last Supper. But we do 'know' what happens, because the words and actions of Jesus are in fact 'very simple' and 'very clear'.

He chose his Words carefully when he said. This is my Body, this is my Blood. – and in Luke's Gospel - Do this in remembrance of me.

These words and actions have been handed down to us by the very disciples 'who were there', they are recorded in scripture, taught to us by the Church and witnessed to by the faith of many and countless miracles. He really is present – just as he said he would be.

So, again following the words of Christ, we can also be sure that the institution of the Eucharist - of Holy Communion at the last supper, was never meant to be a single 'one-off' event that was recorded in the Gospels just for us to remember. No, Christ gives each of us his body and blood in a 'very real way' so that we can be joined with him, and so that we can all participate in his passion, death and resurrection at every Mass.

The Eucharist is the meal that the Lord himself invites each one of us to, so that we can celebrate the joy of his resurrection, and to be nourished in body, mind and spirit. It is a meal of sacred food for our body and soul.

Importantly, we are not meant to come to Mass to just observe a re-enactment of the events of the Last Supper, but to actually take a full part in it, and to receive the full grace of his

body and blood. It is something that we come to 'do' and to be part of together, as a community, not to just observe from the side lines.

And, fortunately, the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion does not depend on 'us', or how we feel, or our mood, or our degree of faith, or how our week had gone.

For he is always present, and especially when we need him most.

So, for the times when we feel we need to be nearer to God,

- when we need him to answer our prayers,
- when we need his comfort and forgiveness,
- when we need his help to understand what is happening in our lives,

it is at these times that we can be 'especially strengthened' by his presence in Holy Communion to accompany us on our journey through life.

The bread and wine we present at the offertory, 'will' shortly become, through the consecration, the very same presence of Christ as at the Last Supper...

...This body and blood of Jesus Christ is the 'very heart' of our faith. It is how Jesus gives himself to us, so that we in turn may give of ourselves to others, through acts of love and kindness and works of charity.

Our feast today should therefore help us to think about why we really come to mass. Mass is the source and summit of our Christian life; it is so important because it is where we hear God's words 'and' receive his spiritual nourishment through Holy Communion. We gather as a consecrated people to do something together. To receive, to share, to be strengthened, and to thank God.

The body and blood of Christ is the greatest gift we have, and it comes from the very hand and will of Christ.

Mother Teresa once said *'In Holy Communion I receive the spiritual food which sustains me in all my labours. Without it, I could not get through one single day, or hour of my life'*.