

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ – June 22/23, 2019 – Reflection

In Church literature, the liturgy is described as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; the Eucharist as the source and summit of our faith. In point of fact, Sunday Mass at just about any local parish church can be something less than those high-sounding ideals. And honestly, rather than being an uplifting encounter with the living God, the Mass can often seem as if it were a convention of the International Brotherhood of Complainers. Stop me if you've heard any of this before: it's hot as blazes in here; it's freezing ... why don't they turn on the heat; that sound system is awful ... I can't hear a thing here in the back; I never understand those readings they do ... especially the ones from Paul; boy, that priest when he talks sounds like he's got pebbles in his mouth ... and rocks in his head; I never heard anybody take so long to say absolutely nothing; why don't they ever do hymns I know; it's too quiet in this place ... it's like a morgue in here; it's too loud in here ... I can't hear myself think let alone pray; why don't they do Masses that appeal to the kids; why does that priest always talk to us like we're a bunch of kids; we should use more Latin and be more reverent; why don't they spice things up and come into the modern world; they're always shakin' us down for money; why don't they paint this place and put in some comfortable seats ... my fanny's fallin' asleep in these hard pews ... and that's not all that's asleep; it's a circus there; he's so dramatic ... he should be on Broadway, but not on the altar; I don't know why I hafta come ... it's so boring!!!

I guess it's kinda hard for most of us, week after week, to come to Mass and really enter into the mystery of God in our midst. It's not always easy to pour out my heart in gratitude and praise for God's gifts to me. It's not always easy to pray, especially when I never seem to hear any answers, just silence and my own thoughts. Hello ... is there anybody up there!?? It's tough to swallow that a tasteless little wafer is what they say it is ... the Body of Christ and that a little sip of too-sweet wine could possibly be Christ's Precious Blood. Not much of this really makes much sense to me and it doesn't have that much to do with what's goin' on in my life.

Pretty much everybody here has heard this from our spouse or our kids or our friends ... maybe most of us have thoughts like that ourselves. We think if we'd been there in Jesus' time, we would have had no problem believing ... the Last Supper, I'd believe ... see a miracle, I'm there for life ... feeding 5000 people on some crusts of bread and a coupla fish, I'd join the Apostles then and there ... being in the upper room seeing the Risen Lord appear, heck I woulda taken that story to more places than St. Paul visited.

But you know what? It was just as hard for Jesus, the High Priest, to hold and keep the crowds as it is for any pastor or preacher, any church or Mass today.

Jesus fed thousands on bread and a few short weeks later, many of those thousands were fed up with Him and wanted to feed Him to the wolves.

Jesus gave a sermon once: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you!" Many of His own disciples

who heard Him talk like that were totally grossed out; they walked out on Him and never came back.

At the Last Supper, Jesus fed His friends on Himself and asked them to keep doing the same till the end of the world. That first Mass, and every Mass since then, He has been offering Himself to us, Body and Blood, soul and divinity. That first Mass, one walked out and sold Him out. The others, when He asked them to pray with Him, dozed off and slept. One denied ever meeting Him ... not once, not twice, but three times! Most of the rest ran away from Him to save their own hides. Some friends!

On Resurrection night, when the Risen High Priest came into the presence of His apostles, His priests; one of them, filled with doubts about God and Church and Jesus and prayer, decided to skip the whole thing that Sunday.

Not a very pretty beginning ... this Church of ours ... this Mass we celebrate ... this Eucharist we receive ... this Lord we profess to follow. What's to say it's true? Why should I believe that a man who seemed to be such a failure rose from the dead? What proof is there that the bread we receive is His Body, the wine we drink is His Blood?

I'll tell ya why I believe, why I go to Mass, why I'm still a priest, why I receive Holy Communion. It's because of those fishermen. They ran away then they came back. They denied then they testified. They doubted then they believed. They hid then they found courage. They were given every chance to take it all back, to admit they lied, no harm, no foul. Not one of them did and they all died because they believed that a little piece of bread could be His Body; a little sip of wine could

be His Blood; and a man who died on a cross was alive and with them and would walk with them till the day they died.

Their faith has become mine and I can't, for the life of me, come up with any good reason for them to do what they did, write what they wrote, preach what they preached, and die how they died ... no good reason at all ... except ... what they gave everything for is TRUE!!