

## **The Body of the Lord**

By Bishop Daniel E. Flores

*Sing my tongue the Savior's glory, of his flesh the mystery sing:* The Church rejoices to focus her attention upon the great mystery of the True and Real Presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Church. The Feast of Corpus Christi, celebrated this year on June 6, reminds us that of all the mysteries that the Church teaches, treasures and transmits, the mystery of the Lord's Holy Body and Blood is the touchstone and heart of our Catholic life. To love the body of the Lord is to grow in the Love he gives to us in this sacrament.

When the people of old saw the Lord Jesus teaching in the plaza, or walking amongst the crowds, they saw him because he was a man. But with time they came to know something not perceived by their physical eyes: they came to acknowledge his identity as the True God made Man. "My Lord *and my God,*" said the Apostle Thomas after the Resurrection.

The divinity of the Lord Jesus is both hidden and revealed by the visible body of the Lord. Everyone saw his physical body, but the disciples saw and loved an identity that went beyond the physical appearance. When they came to believe, they realized that they had come into contact with God himself. Thus, when Jesus wept, these were the tears of God in the flesh. When the sick were touched by Him, they were touched by the human hand of God Himself. Ultimately we are saved by this mystery, for the blood of Christ shed on the cross was the blood of the man who is God—dare we say it—his blood is the blood of God.

The Lord Jesus came in person first when he was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the Virgin Mary. He comes also when the priest invokes the Holy Spirit over the elements of bread and wine during the Eucharistic celebration; through this action of the Spirit, the Lord Jesus is again made truly present. Thus, we can say that by the Eucharistic mystery, the mystery we celebrate on the Feast of Corpus Christi with special attention, the Incarnation of the WORD of God is made present in our time.

But what is this presence about? The Lord Jesus, when he was among us prior to his passion and death, was a constant giver of himself to us. His presence was always a presence *for us*. He was never static in his love. So also, the Eucharistic presence of the Lord is always a presence of the Lord *for us*. Recognized and adored in the monstrance, or acknowledged in the tabernacle, the Lord is present always as the one who gives himself to us. This is why it is proper to appreciate that even outside of Mass, the sacramental presence of the Lord Jesus is a sign of the sacrificial act of love he gave to us on the cross, and which he makes actual for us during the Eucharistic sacrifice we call the Mass.

By this mystery we are able to be touched within the depths of ourselves by the sacrificial love of the Lord Jesus. For the Lord did not simply leave us his presence, he left it to us precisely under the sign of the sacrifice. He gave us his body and blood separately. His body is his body *given up for us*; his blood is blood *poured out for us*. So when we take into ourselves the mystery of the Lord's flesh we take into

ourselves the very life of God Himself; this life is a sacrificial, loving, *gift for us*. Because this body is the body of Christ, it is the body that makes us partakers in this sacrificial, loving, gift-giving that is God's life.

Thus, I pray to the Lord that the Real Presence of the Lord in the Eucharist be always considered a grace and a marvelous gift, given to us so that our hearts might be filled with the love of God. Reverence and respect for the Eucharistic presence of the Lord is a singularly lively sign of authentic Catholic life.