

## **Homily for the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ**

June 22-23, 2019

Readings: Genesis 14:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Luke 9:11B-17

Preacher: Sr. Karen Dietz

In my office there is a beautifully crafted matching chalice and paten gifted to me by two very special friends on the occasion of my Final Profession of Vows as a Sister of St. Joseph of Rochester in 1990. These two friends (who are Protestant, by the way) gave this to me saying that even though the Catholic Church did not yet allow women to be ordained priests, they believed it would be coming soon and they wanted me to be ready. And here we are today, in 2019, and life in our Church is much the same. Women are still not ordained to break and bless the bread and pour and share the wine with the people of God at the Eucharistic Liturgies in our Churches.

However, this is not the Feast, nor is this the place to go on in this vein. Rather, on this most special feast of our liturgical year, I pray with this gift and call to mind my baptism call and the reality that we were all baptized priest, prophet and king; we have all been given the grace to feed God's people with the bread of compassion, understanding, justice and inclusion and to satisfy their thirst with the wine of communion, forgiveness and hope. On this feast day, I ask myself, "As a baptized woman of faith, how and when do I break, bless and share Christ's body and blood with all those I encounter?"

Melchizedek brings out the bread and wine and blessed Abram. Jesus tells the disciples "Feed them yourselves." In the letter of Paul to the Corinthians we are reminded to break the bread and share the wine as often as possible, in remembrance of Jesus and all he did for us. What more of a commissioning do we need? These are all action words: bless, feed, remember, keep the stories of faith alive so that all might live.

Most of us do not have the opportunity to bless, break and share the body and blood of Jesus at Mass as the presider but we all have the obligation to do this with our very lives. Think for a moment of the times when you have reached out to someone in need with a meal or a phone call or visit; the times you sent a card just because you were thinking about them. We bless and consecrate the body of

Christ each time we look at another and see the face of Jesus. Our words or actions of blessing come in the form of encouragement, healing, comfort and peace.

As members of the Body of Christ, we become broken open when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable to another, to soften our hearts so that we might receive the gifts and challenges from those with whom we interact. When we show empathy towards others or towards situations in our world, we are being broken. When our hearts are broken in grief, we become bread broken. This is Eucharist.

Sharing the Body of Christ happens in both ordinary and extraordinary times in our lives. Recall the many times you have taken in a situation that needed attention, in which you stepped up as a volunteer or a donor or a letter writer. Jesus gave of himself over and over again to feed the hungry, bring healing to those afflicted in body, mind or spirit and to speak truth to those in power, even when uncomfortable or dangerous. As followers of Jesus, we are told to do the same; to step out of the comfortable and to be disturbed enough to offer all that we can for the sake of the kingdom of God here and yet to come. This too is Eucharist.

We remember who we are as members of the Body of Christ by telling the stories over and over again. We read and pray with the scriptures, reflecting on the stories of our ancestors in faith and tuning in to the message of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. We also recount the stories of the Gospel in our lives, our families and larger Church families. We hear them retold at family gatherings and small group gatherings of friends and colleagues. It is in the telling that perhaps our own faith receives a gentle boost or even a dramatic shot in the arm. We build one another up in the telling and in so doing, we strengthen the whole of Christ's body. This is Eucharist.

As we celebrate the Body and Blood of Jesus, I invite each of us to take a moment to pray in gratitude for the gift of Jesus, the living bread. We are so fortunate to live and move in the presence of a God who loves us so much that he became completely vulnerable, allowing himself to be consecrated to God, broken open in love and shared for the life of all. This is what we celebrate today and each time we gather as a community of believers to bless, break open and share.

