

In many places throughout the world, today's Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ is celebrated with an outdoor procession. The tradition of a Eucharistic procession began in the 1200s and became virtually a universal custom by the beginning of the 1400s. Today, we all like a good parade once in a while, but church processions just don't seem to be very attractive to most people. I remember well the many attempts at outdoor processions during my seminary days: Palm Sunday, Corpus Christi, rogation days; 400 students and faculty processing around the building and grounds, trying to sing together, or pray the rosary. No matter how it was organized, it never seemed to work very well. Before long, the front of the procession was on one verse and the back part on another. One section would be flat and the other more flat. The procession never seemed to hang together; and that was in a very controlled environment. The direction in the church's *Ordo* says simply: "The annual procession of the feast of Corpus Christi is desirable, in accordance with the law, when today's circumstances permit, and when it can truly be a sign of common faith and adoration."

The idea of a procession on this feast day is that, as we resume Ordinary Time after the observance of Lent and the big 50-day celebration of Easter, we take our most prized possession – our most prized belief, the Most Blessed Sacrament – and we carry it out into the world, and into every aspect of our lives. The procession is the outward visible expression of our individual and communal movement with Jesus Christ, who leads us to our final destination. We want the Eucharist to be not just something we do here in

Church, but something that permeates every aspect of every part of our lives –
twenty-four seven.

What we do here – celebrate and receive the Eucharist – is the easy part. The challenge is to take the Eucharist out there – out in to the world, a very secular world, a world so very much in need of sanctification. What does it mean to take what we do here – and remember: what we do here is become one with each other and one with the Lord in Holy Communion – what does it mean to take this unity, this communion, and carry it out there?

What does it mean, for example, in terms of my relationship with my spouse? If I am one with my spouse and one with the Lord *here*, how do I relate with my spouse *out there*?

What does it mean in terms of my relationship with my family? If I am one with my family and one with the Lord *here*, how do I relate with my children, with my parents, with my brothers and sisters *out there*?

When I go to my job: what does it mean in terms of my relationship with my co-workers? If I am one with my co-workers and one with the Lord *here*, how do I relate with them *out there*?

And so forth, and so on, in every aspect of my life.

Each of our three readings today gives a very important insight into what it means to take the Body and Blood of Jesus *out there*. In the first reading, Melchizedek shares bread and wine with Abram and gives him a blessing; Abram gives Melchizedek a tenth of everything he had. Taking the Body and Blood of Jesus *out there* means sharing our blessings with others. This is called tithing: giving one-tenth of what we have received to others.

In the second reading, Paul does for the Corinthian community what Jesus had done for him: “I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you.” Taking the Body and Blood of Jesus *out there* means taking what we have been given, and passing it on to others. This is called sacrificial giving: giving to others in the same way Jesus has given to us.

In the gospel, Jesus taught and healed, and he took what he had available – 5 loaves and 2 fish – and fed the multitude of 5,000. Taking the Body and Blood of Jesus *out there* means taking what we have available, and sharing with others who are hungry, who are in need.

The bottom line is this: the Body and Blood of Jesus – the Eucharist – is all about giving:

- Jesus giving himself totally to us – at the Last Supper and on the cross;
- and we, giving ourselves totally to others – not just here at this table, but out there at all the other “tables” or places where we meet.