

By Joan Mitchell, CSJ

Place a loaf of bread, a glass of grape juice or wine, a bible, a lighted candle, and flowers at the center of your group.

**LEADER:** We reflect today on a mystery handed on to us from Jesus' first disciples.

**ALL:** Let us give thanks always.

**LEADER:** On this feast we celebrate the Easter mystery of Jesus Christ; we proclaim his death, his resurrection, and the sacrament that feeds us and strengthens us in holiness.

**ALL:** We come to be fed at the table Jesus sets.

**LEADER:** May we pour out our lives in loving service to our neighbors.

**ALL:** May we become one communion of love.

# SUNDAY

## by SUNDAY

On this feast of Corpus Christi, the Body of Christ, I want to share with you a homily preached by Father John Forliti, who was our chaplain at St. Catherine University. His homily was in response to the Sandy Hook shootings and about his experience of solidarity in the Body of Christ.

*The Body of Christ has three meanings: first, the physical human body of Jesus; second, the sacramental Body of Christ in the Eucharist; and third, the Body of Christ that is the Church. We are the Body of Christ. May I show you a few snapshots of the Body of Christ.*

*It's Christmas Eve, my first time at San Lucas, Guatemala. We arrive at the parish an hour before midnight. As we pull into the*

*parking area alongside the 400-year-old church building, we greet two ladies of the parish who have been cooking small portions of pork, each piece wrapped in leaves. The traditional Christmas Eve procession is making its way through the village knocking on doors to see if there is room for Joseph and Mary, who is about to give birth.*

*When the procession finally arrives at church, Mass begins. The faithful overflow out the doors, their singing is robust and beautiful, their sincerity palpable. After Mass, the feast, the only time all year that meat will be in their diet. Taking it in was a profound experience for me of the Body of Christ feeding the hungry.*

*Years later, I am at Selma, Alabama, in the midst of 25,000 to 30,000 people, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and non-believers, marching and praying and singing "We shall overcome" under the protection of the U.S. military with their backs to us, their rifles facing the shouts of red-necked bigots. This was the Body of Christ yearning for justice.*

*Jump ahead a few years. The scene is the St. Paul Auditorium. One of the auxiliary bishops, Bishop Raymond Lucker, has presided at a Mass, leading 3,000 high school youth from nearly every parish in the diocese in prayer. One of the hymns during the Mass was led by a group of deaf teenagers. Imagine 3,000 kids following the lead of their deaf brothers and sisters,*

"Eucharistic solidarity teaches us to imagine, to hope for, and to create new possibilities... At the table that Jesus prepares, all assemble: in his body we are made anew, a community of faith—the living and the dead. In our presence, the Son of Man gathers up the remnants of our memories, the broken fragments of our histories, and judges, blesses, and transforms them. His eucharistic banquet re-orders us, re-members us, restores us, and makes us one."

Shawn Copeland from *Enfleshing Freedom: body, race, and being*, 128.



*praising God in sign language, and after Mass, 3,000 youth plus their bishop, dancing the square dance—the Body of Christ being delighted.*

*Meanwhile over in downtown Minneapolis, three Sisters of St. Joseph are meeting the needs of countless families in poverty: Sister Roseanne with one hand receiving donations of furniture, household goods, clothes, and food, and with the other hand passing them along to people in need; Sister Doris and Sister Denis visiting the sick and homebound, bringing friendship and Eucharist, the Body of Christ.*

*Nine-eleven. Terrorists attack our nation. We are in shock. Will the skyscrapers in downtown Minneapolis be next? Word spread quickly for a prayer service at St. Olaf, a downtown parish. The church quickly filled to overflowing, people seated in the aisles and sanctuary, out the doors. Words were inadequate, perhaps even unnecessary. It was enough to gather together, to feel the breathing and the closeness of good people in the face of evil. The Body of Christ, Jesus' agony in the garden now ours. The Body of Christ in pain.*

- **When have you experienced the Body of Christ feeding the hungry?**
- **The Body of Christ yearning for justice?**
- **The Body of Christ being delighted?**
- **The Body of Christ in pain?**

# GOSPEL

## Why don't you give them something to eat?

**NARRATOR:** Jesus spoke to the crowds of the reign of God, and he healed all who were in need of healing. As sunset approached, the twelve came to him.

**TWELVE:** Dismiss the crowd so that they can go into the villages and farms in the neighborhood and find themselves lodging and food, for this is certainly an out-of-the-way place.

**JESUS:** Why don't you give them something to eat yourselves?

**TWELVE:** We have nothing but five loaves and two fishes. Shall we go and buy food for all these people?

**NARRATOR:** There were about five thousand men.

**JESUS:** Have them sit down in groups of fifty or so.



**NARRATOR:** Jesus' disciples followed his instructions and got the people all seated. Then, taking the five loaves and the two fishes, Jesus raised his eyes to heaven, pronounced a blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to his disciples for distribution to the crowd. They all ate until they had enough. What was left filled twelve baskets.

Luke 9.11-17

## What does Eucharist celebrate?

**M**any parishes in past years and many still celebrate this feast with outdoor processions. In college we scattered rose and peony petals on the ground ahead of the priest carrying the Eucharist in a monstrance from one outdoor altar bedecked with flowers to another. At each altar the priest blessed the people with the monstrance.

The celebrations were richly sacramental, people to see, flowers to smell, music to hear, and back in the Church bread to taste and eat that

had become the Body of Christ. The bread broken and shared becomes the sacrament of Jesus' wholehearted love poured out for us even unto death. This is a sign with the power to transform us into Christ.

When we gather at every Eucharist, we remember Jesus' giving his whole self for us. We find strength and courage to try this kind of self-giving ourselves. We gather again and again, so that we become more and more like him. We gather in pain and in delight.



We pour out our lives as Jesus did. We put our lives on the altar with his.

Like the sacrament itself, we become Jesus' real presence in our world. We become what we receive.

● How does celebrating Eucharist nourish you?

● How have you become what you receive?

In Sunday's gospel Jesus takes familiar, visible food (bread and fish) and blesses it, acknowledging this food is a gift of God. He breaks the bread and gives it to the crowd that has listened to his teaching. Jesus' actions—take, bless, break, and give—outline what happens whenever Christians celebrate Eucharist.

Amazingly, Jesus' disciples gather 12 baskets of leftovers, more food than the bread and fish with which they started. Even when all have eaten and had their fill, abundance remains. Jesus has more to give than humans are capable of receiving.



The 12 baskets of leftovers symbolize a fullness, enough for all always, including enough for us in our time. Jesus Christ reveals God's graciousness. His body and blood will feed all those who hunger and thirst always.

When shared, the food Jesus gives multiplies, just as love and forgiveness do. Jesus' teaching nourishes. We hear and make his word our own in living it. We become what we eat in sharing the bread that becomes the body of Christ at Eucharist. The body and the self-giving love it signifies multiply. Both hearing Jesus' teaching and sharing bread involve communion, an intimate sharing in which love and commitment multiply.

At the beginning of Sunday's gospel, Jesus urges his disciples to give the crowd something to eat themselves. This is our call, too, to hand on what we become in the Eucharist—nourishment in abundance for all.

● How does Eucharist lead you to become nourishment for others?

The reforms of the Second Vatican

Council call the baptized to participate fully in the Lord's Supper as an action of priest and people together. The people of God bring the gifts to the altar. We pray the Prayers of the

Faithful together. We face the celebrant and respond in dialogue prayers. We exchange a sign of peace. People serve as lectors and Eucharistic ministers.

Eucharist is a communal liturgical action, in which we experience communion as the Body of Christ. Our celebration expresses hope that all may be one and spurs us to action for transforming the world.

At Eucharist Christ is present in the assembly, the Word, the priest, and the bread and wine. As the Second Vatican Council envisioned, "The liturgy daily builds up those who are in the Church, making them a holy Temple of the Lord, a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #5).

● How are you participating in the transformation of the world in Christ?

● What do you find it always right and just to be thankful for at Eucharist?



## Melchizedek blesses Abram.

In Sunday's first reading Melchizedek, the king of Salem, blesses Abram for routing the kings who plundered goods in the region. Ancient Salem later becomes Jerusalem. The word *salem* means *peace*.

The power of Abram's God to do such great things through humans impresses Melchizedek. He blesses Abram for living in the power of his God. To express gratitude and win Abram's favor, Melchizedek gives a festive banquet for him. This is the symbolic meaning of the bread and wine he brings forth in the story.

Abram demonstrates he will not use the power of God to get riches for himself. In the verses that follow Sunday's reading, Abram refuses to take

any of the plunder. He gives King Melchizedek a tithe of the booty and the rest to his soldiers.

### A Blessing for Abram

**Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words:**

**"Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand."**

Genesis 14.18-20

- What do you have to be especially thankful for in the celebration of the Eucharistic feast this week? How has God acted in and through you?

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## PRAY

Bless and share the bread and wine you placed at the center of your group. The blessings below draw from Sunday's second reading, 1 Corinthians 11.23-26.

**LEADER:** Let us remember that in the year AD 56 the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth: I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night he was handed over, took bread, and after he had given thanks, broke it, and said: **ALL: This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.**

**LEADER:** He took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

**ALL: As often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.**

**LEADER:** Now in our time we receive what Paul and generations of believers have handed on from the Lord.

**ALL: This sign of Jesus' love for all.**

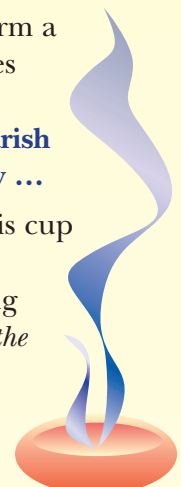
**LEADER:** Jesus challenges us, "Why don't you give them something to eat yourselves?" Let us break off a piece of bread, give it to the person at right, and affirm a way the person nourishes you.

**ALL: May this bread nourish you as you nourish us by ...**

**LEADER:** May sharing this cup of wine (or grape juice) help us rejoice in sharing our faith in Jesus. *Pass the cup.*

**Each: Amen.**

*Exchange a sign of peace.*



## DO SOMETHING

CHARITY

JUSTICE

- Partner with a child to make, bake, and enjoy fresh bread together. Use frozen bread or a breadmaker.
- Visit [Feedingamerica.org](http://Feedingamerica.org), a national system of food banks. Explore their website to learn about ways to participate locally in fighting hunger.



During the summer months visit [goodgroundpress.com](http://goodgroundpress.com) for daily prayers and a variety of online retreats.