

June 22, 2025

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Luke 9:11b-17

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured. As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, “Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.” He answered them, “Give them some food yourselves.” They replied, “Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people.” Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Jesus said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty.” They did so and made them all sit down. Then, *taking the five loaves* and the two fish, Jesus *raised his eyes to heaven*, pronounced a blessing over them, *broke them*, and *gave them* to his disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate until they were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

### **Background:**

Luke describes this event as taking place in Bethsaida, a familiar place to Jesus and the disciples. It is a fishing village on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee and was the home of Philip, Andrew and Peter. Jesus had cured a blind man here (Mark 8:22-26). Jesus has also complained that the people of Bethsaida and Chorazin were being slow to repent (Matthew 11:21). They would have been familiar with Jesus and his ministry. This may explain the great crowds that gathered to hear Jesus speak about the Kingdom of God. The reports that he was “healing those who needed to be cured” would have also drawn those hoping to be healed and those hoping to witness Jesus’ healing. As the day nears its end and the time for the main meal of the day, the twelve (with just five loaves and two fish) suggest that Jesus send the crowd away so that they can get provisions and secure lodging.

This Gospel text has many levels of significance for Luke’s community. They would be familiar with the stories from the Hebrew Scripture where God had acted to feed their ancestors. Most important would be the feeding of manna and quail during the exodus (Exodus 16:4-35). A story less familiar to the contemporary Christian is that of Elisha, a prophet, who was able to feed 100 people with 20 barley loaves.

“A man came from Baal-shalishah bringing the man of God twenty barley loaves made from the first-fruits, and fresh grain in the ear. ‘Give it to the people to eat.’ Elisha said. But his servant objected, ‘How can I set this before a hundred men?’ Give it to the people to eat,’ Elisha insisted. ‘For thus says the Lord, they shall eat and there shall be some left over.’ And when they had eaten, there was some left over, as the Lord had said.” (2 Kings 4:42-44)

With this background, Luke’s community would understand that Jesus was doing for them what God had done for their ancestors.

On yet another important level for today’s feast, Luke has chosen to tell this story using language that would remind the Christian community of their Eucharistic banquet. The sequence of the verbs in this text: “taking the loaves,” “said the blessing,” “broke them,” and “gave them to the disciples” (Luke 9:16) is identical to the text used by Luke at the Last Supper. “Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘this is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.’” (Luke 22:19) This language reminds the people of the Last Supper, the Eucharistic banquet, and the final banquet when the Kingdom of God is restored. This last notion is enhanced by the fact that Luke reports that “all were satisfied.” In fact, the context for this story is that Jesus was speaking about the Kingdom of God and healing those who were in need (Luke 9:12).

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. What were your favorite meals growing up? What made them memorable?

2. Do you have memories of being hungry? Do you have a relationship with people who typically do not have enough to eat?
3. How does your experience of hunger affect how you hear this Gospel?
4. Do you hunger for something other than food?
5. Can you recall passages in the scriptures that refers to a heavenly banquet?
6. If you imagine a gathering of people hoping to be healed by a religious teacher, what kind of people would you expect to find among the group?
7. How often do you think those gathered there ever sat down to a meal where they could eat as much as they wanted and have leftovers besides?
8. The Gospel text gives some hints that the disciples had been talking about how to feed the people even before they approached Jesus. They knew how many loaves and fish they had, and they had speculated about how many day's wages it would take to feed those who had gathered. What are some of the other things they might have discussed among themselves?
9. How might they be feeling as they approached Jesus?
10. How do you think the disciples heard Jesus' statement that they give the people some food themselves?
11. The last verse of the text says that the crowd ate until they were satisfied. Does God also desire for you to have enough so that you are satisfied? Do you think that God desires for those you will gather with to hear this text to be satisfied? What about all those who will not hear this text this Sunday for whatever reason?
12. Can you talk with God about this feast, or how this Gospel is speaking to you, or whatever God is moving within you today?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to [annemarie.lom@gmail.com](mailto:annemarie.lom@gmail.com)

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fsc-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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### **Excerpts from the readings for June 22, 2025, The Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ**

In those days, 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." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.

The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool."

The scepter of your power the Lord will stretch forth from Zion: "Rule in the midst of your enemies."

"Yours is princely power, in holy splendor; before the daystar, like the dew, I have begotten you."

Brothers and sisters: 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, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also 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." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured. As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, "Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here." He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves." They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people." Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty." They did so and made them all sit down. Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

#### **Excerpts from Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:1-4; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; and Luke 9:11-17**

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for June 22nd, the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. The Gospel from Luke has the story of Jesus feeding a crowd of 5000 men who had followed him into a deserted place, and the leftovers filling twelve baskets. "Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate and were satisfied." The other readings also have references to body and blood, bread and wine, the priest Melchizedek, and spoken blessings. In the first reading from Genesis, Melchizedek brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, and blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand." Psalm 110 proclaims, "Yours is princely power; I have begotten you. You are a priest forever, in the line of Melchizedek." In the second reading, from the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "The Lord Jesus took bread, broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And in the same way also the cup. 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.'" We might expect a Gospel reading from the Last Supper on the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. That's the event where Jesus presented the blessed and broken bread, and the wine in the cup, saying, "This is my body, ... this is my blood, ... do this in memory of me." But we don't have that direct of an approach today. Instead, the second reading recalls this event for us, and the selected Gospel tells a precursor story, one that leads up to or lays a foundation for an understanding of Jesus instituting the Eucharist. It is not in Luke, but John's chapter 6, where, after the feeding of a multitude, nearly the entire rest of the chapter is the Bread of Life discourse. "Unless you eat my body and drink my blood, you shall not have life within you." In the year of Luke in our liturgical cycle, today's Gospel is Luke's version of that feeding of thousands of followers. From five loaves and two fish, 5000 men and their companions are fed, and the leftover fragments fill twelve baskets. There is enough of Jesus to go around—more than enough, for all of us, and then some—to each one of us who believes in the saving power, by his resurrection, of that bloodied body, in which he died on the cross. Paul told the Corinthians, "As often as you partake of this body and blood, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes."

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