

## The Feast of Corpus Christi



***THE GOSPEL. Mark 14:12-16, 22-26***

***This is my body.***

Jesus,  
you call us all.  
None of us are worthy, but you tell us,  
“your souls shall be healed.”

“This is my body;  
take it and  
eat.”

Oh, please stay with us forever.  
Make us one with you,  
one with each  
other.

Let your love course  
through our lives  
and heal us.  
Make us  
one  
in  
  
your one  
body.

**THE FIRST READING. Exodus 24:3-8**

*This is the blood of the covenant.*

Blood:

a sign  
of the covenant.

Moses  
splashed some  
on the altar and then  
some onto the people,  
recalling the solemn bond  
they had entered  
with God.

They would be God's people.  
God would love them  
forever.

Christ's blood,  
Christ's body, Christ's love:  
marks of the new  
covenant.

Sprinkle it, splash it,  
drown us  
in your  
love,  
O,  
Christ.

**THE SECOND READING. Hebrews 9:11-15**

*Christ entered once for all into the sanctuary,  
with his own blood,  
obtaining eternal redemption.*

Once for  
all time, Christ  
sealed the covenant.

With his own blood.

He pushed straight into  
the sacred place  
with all of us  
in tow.

Who could love us more?

Thank you, Lord.  
Thank you. (Anne Osdieck)

## An Interesting Reflection on the Eucharist by Ron Rolheiser (Edited)

### Eucharist as God's Physical Embrace

Rolheiser says that in the Eucharist God physically embraces us. Indeed, that is what all sacraments are, God's physical embrace. Words, as we know, have a relative power. In critical situations they often fail us. When this happens, we have still another language, the language of ritual. The most ancient and primal ritual of all is the ritual of physical embrace. It can say and do what words cannot.

Jesus acted on this.

For most of his ministry, he used words. Through words, he tried to bring us God's consolation, challenge, and strength. His words, like all words, had a certain power. Indeed, his words stirred hearts, healed people, and affected conversions. But at a time, powerful though they were, they too became inadequate. Something more was needed. So, on the night before his death, having exhausted what he could do with words, Jesus went beyond them. He gave us the Eucharist, his physical embrace, his kiss, a ritual within which he holds us to his heart.

To my mind, that is the best understanding there is of Eucharist. The Eucharist is God's kiss. A couple of years ago, Brenda Peterson, in a remarkable little essay entitled, *In Praise of Skin*, describes how she once was afflicted by a skin-rash that no medicine could effectively soothe. Finally, she turned to her grandmother, remembering how, as a little girl, her grandmother used to massage her skin whenever she had rashes, bruises, or was otherwise ill. The ancient remedy worked again. Her grandmother massaged her skin, over and over again, and the rash that seemingly couldn't be eradicated disappeared.

Skin needs to be touched. This is what happens in the Eucharist and that is why the Eucharist, and every other Christian sacrament, always has some very tangible physical element to it—a laying on of hands, a consuming of bread and wine, an immersion into

water, an anointing with oil. An embrace needs to be physical, not only something imagined.

G K Chesterton once wrote: “There comes a time, usually late in the afternoon, when the little child tires of playing policeman and robbers. It’s then that he begins to torment the cat!” Mothers, with young children, are only too familiar with this late afternoon hour and its particular dynamic. There comes an hour, usually just before supper, when a child’s energy is low, when it is tired and whining, and when the mother has exhausted both her patience and her repertoire of warnings: “Leave that alone! Don’t do that!” The child, tense and miserable, is clinging to her leg. At that point, she knows what to do. She picks up the child. Touch, not word, is what’s needed. In her arms, the child grows calm and tension leaves its body.

That’s an image for the Eucharist. We are that tense, over-wrought child, perennially tormenting the cat. There comes a point, even with God, when words aren’t enough. God has to pick us up, like a mother her child. Physical embrace is what’s needed. Skin needs to be touched. God knows that. It’s why Jesus gave us the Eucharist.