

Week 1: We share life with Christ when we receive Him in the Holy Eucharist.

This week, we celebrate the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, which honors His gift of His body and blood to us, and commemorates Jesus' command to us to celebrate the Holy Eucharist in remembrance of Him and His great sacrifice.

The Catholic Church teaches us that the fullness of Christ as God-man is really, truly, substantially, and abidingly present in the Holy Eucharist in soul and divinity for our spiritual nourishment, through the literal transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, an event which takes place in the bloodless sacrifice of the New Testament which is the Mass. From this real presence in the Eucharist follows our need to worship Him in the sacrament, which is the visible sign of an invisible truth. Its principal effect is the union of the human soul with Christ in love, while at the same time providing spiritual nourishment by increasing sanctifying grace. It produces also a certain spiritual delight, blots out venial sin, and preserves us from mortal sin by exciting to charity and, as Christ explicitly promised, the pledge of a glorious resurrection and eternal happiness.

Jesus died for our sins so we may obtain salvation in His name. He gave us the means to obtain life in Him through the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. As such, we are obligated by our Faith to show the utmost reverence towards this precious Sacrament of life.

Week 2: We share life with Christ when we acknowledge our sinful nature.

The greater the sins forgiven, the greater the love the sinner shows towards the Lord Jesus and conversely, the greater the love of the Lord for the sinner. As you will note, the Readings for this week speak of the necessity of repentance and forgiveness in order to receive the gift of salvation.

In the First Reading, we will learn, no matter how great his sins may be, if an individual sincerely repents of his sins, God can and will forgive him. For indeed God is greater than any sin we can commit. God always calls us back to faithfulness and fidelity to Him. Such is the grace of God. Without it, we could never repent and be reconciled with God when we sin.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians in the Second Reading, he shows that because the Christian has been crucified with Christ, it is no longer he who lives, but it is Christ who lives in him. This new status of justification in Christ is not achieved through good works on our part; it was only made possible by the crucifixion and death of Christ, and the individual's personal 'dying' with Christ. Crucified with Christ, the new Christian has died to the Law.

The Reading from the Gospel (Luke 7:36-8:3) relates the story of the penitent woman. The reading begins with a Pharisee inviting Jesus to dine at his house. Considering that the Pharisees usually displayed animosity towards Jesus, this show of hospitality to Jesus in itself was a courageous act on the part of one Pharisee. During the dinner, you will note that Jesus neither judged, nor rebuked the woman as the Pharisee expected. Instead, He welcomed her. This approach goes against the ways of the world; we are asked to love instead of judging, to welcome instead of rejecting. Those who come in contact with Jesus manifest one of two behavior; they are

either attracted to Him or repelled by Him. If like Simon, they appear to be doing good deeds in order to gain respect, honor, fame or wealth, they shun the company of sinners like prisoners, beggars, prostitutes, etc... By doing so, they neglect to give sinners the help that they need to find healing and wholeness.

This week, let us examine our hearts. Do we invite Jesus in our lives for prestige? Or do we love Him because He is the one and only Saviour who died for our sins?

Week 3: We share life with Christ when we deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Him.

The Gospel reading (Luke 9:18-24) delivers a number of spiritual messages, but more importantly, it draws our attention to the necessity of renouncing our life (or attachments) and following Jesus by persevering in the trials that may cross our daily path. Those who strive for fame, wealth, pleasures are lost. For these goals oppose spiritual growth. It is better to have little and to be happy and thankful to God for all that one receives. It is better to be humble, submissive, and obedient to God and His commandments, than to elevate oneself above all others. Those who defend and spread their faith shall be glorified by God throughout eternity. Those who are ashamed of Jesus and their faith face eternal damnation unless they repent. For one cannot serve two masters, the God of glory and the god of indifference.

Jesus said, **"Take up your cross and follow me."** That is not just a bunch of words; it is a strict command by the Lord Himself, to follow Him. This week, let us reflect on these sacred words and ask ourselves if we have indeed taken up our cross and are following Him. If so, praise the Lord. If not, then it is never too late to begin. This week, let us also pray for one another, especially for those who need to take up their cross, that they may find the strength to follow the Lord Jesus.

Week 4: We share life with Christ when we serve one another through love.

As true disciples of the Lord who have been freed from the slavery to sin, we are called to be slaves of one another (Gal. 5:13) in Christ. To return to the attractions of the flesh, worldly goods, pleasures, power and wealth is to renounce our "yes" to the Lord God.

In the Gospel, we hear that Jesus is rejected by the Samaritans. Knowing that His ministry was approaching its end, Jesus sets His eyes on Jerusalem, where He faces death as prophesied in the Old Testament. Along the road, someone came to Him and said that he would follow Jesus wherever He went (Lk 9:57). To him, Jesus replied, **"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head,"** (Lk 9:58). From this response, we learn two things. First of all, from the words, "foxes have holes," which is symbolic of 'hiding,' Jesus is saying that He does not trick anyone into following Him. Secondly, by stating that foxes and birds have a resting place, and the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head, Jesus was indicating what was required of true discipleship, Total dedication. **"No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."**

Then Jesus tells another person to follow Him. The person replies, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father," (Lk 9:59). To

this, Jesus says, "**Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God,**" (Lk 9:60).

(Continued on page 4)