**Corpus Christi Year C**

**19th June 2022**

**Reading I: Genesis 14:18-20**

Salem (meaning Peace) had been the city of the Jebusites, until David took it as his capital circa. 1,000 B.C. as Jerusalem (God is Peace). Later writers were at pains to point out the legitimacy of this deed and so this passage showed that some 850 years earlier Melchizedek, the King and High Priest of Salem had supplied provisions for Abraham, whom he also blessed. Abraham gave him the legal tithe demonstrating his debt and their mutual respect.

For the author of ‘Hebrews’ Melchizedek can be read as a precedent for Christ. Like him, Jesus was not a Levitical priest and yet Abraham had acknowledged Melchizedek’s priesthood. The gifts of bread and wine were also allegorically interpreted by Philo, (c.50 A.D.) and by the Church Fathers from Cyprian (250 A.D.) onwards as a type of the Eucharist, especially in its sacrificial character.

**Psalm 110;1-4**

This is one of the royal psalms. Its date and original circumstances are in dispute. Whatever the circumstances, Melchizedek is taken as a prototype of the priest-king.

The author of Hebrews (7;11-26) quotes this psalm because it enables him to develop his own teaching on Christ's high priesthood. The first Christian converts had stressed the Messianic vocation which established his Kingship. Now Hebrews develops the further Christology (implicit in the early Church's sacrificial interpretation of Jesus' death) that he is also priest.

The psalm also reminds us that in the Eucharist Christ is himself the President who presides over his Eucharistic banquet and gives himself as the sacrificial victim to the faithful. He "gives himself with his own hand" (Saint Thomas Aquinas).

**Reading II: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

This passage was the second reading for the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. Then the context was the connection between the Eucharist and the Crucifixion / Resurrection. To-day our thoughts are with its connection to the ongoing Eucharistic rite in the resurrected Body of Christ in the world.

The striking point in this passage is that Paul does not speak of the authority for the Eucharist in a static way as might be suggested by the formulae, 'This is ... 'Instead, the account is full of dynamic expressions. Some words, phrases and ideas betray an Aramaic origin. It is a positive proclamation of his death as a key event. This three-dimensional characteristic may be seen in the phrase ***'as a memorial of me****’* It contained an idea, familiar to Jews throughout their history but since overlooked.

For the Jew, participation in a rite was not to commemorate a past event, that happened to one’s ancestors but to enter it oneself. So, in each year’s Passover, each generation would share in the original experience. When the Corinthian Christians celebrated the weekly Eucharist they would be sacramentally present at the Last Supper and therefore in the real presence of Christ himself.

This is emphasised still more by the further phrase: 'until he comes.' This recalls the prayer of the Jewish Passover meal that God may remember the Messiah, that his kingdom may come. The 'memorial' is not only something in the past but is something that is above time altogether and can embrace the Feast which follows the Judgement. Prominent then is the idea that the Eucharist not only looks to the past but looks forward to the fulfilment of the kingdom.

**Gospel: Luke 9:11-17**

There are several stories of miraculous meals in the Gospels and they all bear marks which indicate their later use in the liturgy of the Church. We have seen (above) how the Eucharist was an event outside of time. It was also a domestic meal, a Royal banquet, a sacrificial death and the means of supernatural life.

All these motifs have had their place in shaping the language of the feeding signs. It would be natural if some details, originating on one occasion appeared in one or more of the other incidents in the Gospels. On the historical level there can be little doubt that to-day’s meeting of Jesus and his followers in the desert marked the critical turning point in the Galilean ministry.

(See John's note that Jesus' followers wanted to make him king, that is, a political Messiah, and Mark's enigmatic note that Jesus sent his disciples away while he dismissed the crowd. In the light of John's account, it is clear that Jesus did this to prevent the disciples from becoming infected with the crowd's dangerous political messianism.)

There is no reason why this critical meeting should not have been accompanied by a meal, which, like all Jesus' meals with his disciples, would have eschatological associations as a foretaste of the eschatological banquet. (as witnessed in the second reading)

In earliest Christianity Jesus was interpreted as the prophet of the end-time, repeating Moses' gift of the manna (a theme that comes out most strongly in the Johannine discourse following this episode) and the miraculous multiplication of loaves by Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44).

Further, the language of the Eucharistic liturgy has coloured the narrative: "sit down ... taking . . . loaves . . . blessed . . . broke …. gave and ate."

We generally think of the Last Supper as the only occasion for the institution of the Eucharist. But the New Testament sees two further bases for the rite: the regular meals of the earthly Jesus with his followers during his ministry and the appearance meals after the resurrection.

All these meals emphasize an aspect that was certainly present in the Last Supper (Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16-18), namely, its eschatological character. The Eucharist is not only a feeding upon a past sacrifice made a present reality, but also a foretaste of the messianic banquet to come.