

Rev. Emmanuel-Garet Ifeakor
Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a
First Corinthians 10:16-17
John 6:51-58

**THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST SOLEMNITY
EPIPHANY CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Louisville, KY, USA
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Theme: The Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

Fredrick W. Faber was born in England. He was raised in the Church of England. He was born in 1814. He was ordained in the Church of England in 1839. Influenced by the teachings of John Henry Newman, he followed Newman into the Roman Catholic Church in 1845. Fredrick wrote 150 songs. Among the songs he wrote, he dedicated one to the Holy Eucharist. One of the verses goes like this. (Singing) "Thy body, Soul, and Godhead, all, O mystery of love divine. I cannot encompass all I have. For all thou hast and art are mine. Sweet Sacrament, we thee adore; Oh, make us love thee more and more. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we are going to reflect on the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. In the gospel, Jesus says, "You're going to eat my flesh, you're going to drink my blood." And unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life within you. Having said this, the Jews quarreled among themselves. Other translations say: 'They quarreled among themselves.' They argued among themselves. They argued sharply among themselves. They disputed among themselves. They contended among themselves. There was a debate among themselves.' In fact, there was a division among themselves because of Jesus' teaching that you have to eat my flesh and drink my blood. This is not the first time Jesus' teaching has generated misunderstanding and controversy. We recall in John 10, when Jesus was teaching about the Good Shepherd. He said, "I will lay down my life and take it up again." In John 10: 19, there was division among the people because of his teaching. Also, in John 7:43, when the identity of Jesus was questioned, people asked, "Is Jesus the Messiah who is to come?" Other people said, "No, we know His Father; we know His mom." He is not the Messiah that is to come. There was division in the crowd because of Jesus. There was controversy among themselves.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist attracts and repels. To some people, the real presence of Jesus attracts them to Jesus, but to others, the teaching of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist repels them. Recall, at the moment of this teaching, after they must have quarreled among themselves, many of them stopped following Jesus. Jesus lost some disciples because of this teaching. It attracts. It repels. In the first reading, Moses had to tell the people, "Do not forget your God, who fed you in the desert with a food unknown to your fathers." God fed them with manna. The manna the Israelites were fed in the first reading today prefigures or foreshadows Christ as the true bread of life, and subsequently, we believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. On this note, Moses cautioned them not to forget it. In the Last Supper, Jesus instituted this sacrament of His body and blood. Thus, make sure you keep on believing. Make sure you hold on to this faith because Jesus is present in the Holy Eucharist. He is truly, wholly, and substantially present, -body, soul, blood, and divinity- in the Holy Eucharist. In the second reading, the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, Paul put it as a question to you and to me. He says, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, whenever we come here on Sundays or to daily masses, after the words of consecration, the bread ceases to be bread and changes to the Body of Christ. The wine ceases to be wine and changes to the Blood of Christ. In the Catholic tradition and theology, this is called transubstantiation. They have undergone substantial changes, but still appear as bread and wine. So, the appearances of bread and wine should not confuse you. It has substantially changed. Whenever this is done, it is not a symbol nor a memorial. They have changed completely and absolutely into the Body and Blood of Christ, which only the Catholic Church can offer you.

My dear friends in Christ, our faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is predicated on trusting in Jesus' words and trusting in God's words. When we trust in Jesus' word, the faith we have in the Holy Eucharist will make us the people God has called us to be. We should also note that our faith in the Body and Blood of Christ is the faith we manifest whenever we come to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. This is our faith. We should trust Christ even when His word doesn't concur with human logic or human reasoning. The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" This is because their culture forbids eating human beings. However, they took the words of Jesus literally. Therefore, Jesus is teaching about being the Bread of Life, a metaphor that confounded many of His listeners. They struggled with Jesus' teaching, probably

because it defied their understanding and imagination. Dear friends in Christ, as I said earlier, faith sometimes requires trusting in Jesus' words even when they challenge our logic. This is our faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. That is why Saint Thomas Aquinas said that our faith complements our reasoning. Our faith takes over where our reasoning and human logic end in the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. As I said before, the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist repels and attracts. Some people stopped following Jesus because of this teaching. But other folks remained with him. Those who believed and trusted in Jesus' words. The real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist calls for adoration, deep reverence, and worship. My dear people of God, one more thing: a study has shown that in the Catholic Church, people may feel unwelcome. People may feel unseen. People might not believe that they are carried along. People may also disagree on the way their priests do things. Some may also not like the way the music is going in the church; however, they don't leave the Catholic Church. Why do they not leave the Catholic church? Because they believe in the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and it is only the Catholic Church that can offer this sacred reality. May God help us in our faith to continue to hold fast to the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. We end with our hymn again, composed by Frederick Farber. (Singing), "Thy body, Soul, and Godhead, all, O mystery of love divine. I cannot encompass all I have. For all thou hast and art are mine. Sweet Sacrament, we thee adore; Oh, make us love thee more and more. Oh, make us love thee more and more." The real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.