

## **Year C Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ**

**Gn 14:18-20; Ps 110; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Lk 9:11b-17**

The function of a priest is to make God present; a priest is in the service of *religion*, the bond between the divine and the human. The most typical activity of a priest is to make offerings to God (Heb 8:3). Christ has made all of us believers into a priestly people, a kingdom of priests (1 Pt 2:4-5; Rv 1:6). We are the temple or house of God (1 Cor 3:16-17; Heb 3:6); we are also the body of Christ, 1 Cor 12:27, which is being built up, Eph 4:12. When we go to communion, we must be careful to be fully aware of this reality, that Christ has gathered us as a community or “communion” so that we manifest God to others by our holy lives, living out the two commandments, love of God and of “neighbor” (note that determining who is our neighbor is not a static thing regarding who’s closest: the Good Samaritan *became a neighbor* to one who was supposed to be his enemy, Lk 10:36). I write this because we tend to individualize Catholic Christian worship and falsely “spiritualize,” that is, disembody it, from the building up of Christ’s Body, which is done through love, Eph 4:16. A warning against not doing this follows the passage which is our second reading today.

How did Christ gather this Church? By offering himself, from his baptism to his death on the cross, Jn 11:49-52. In the Old Testament, animal sacrificial offerings were made to God, but in the last days when God’s Son was sent, the Son offered himself, Heb 10:1-10. Christ’s priesthood was not the typical Jewish one, which was by lineage and hereditary. His priesthood had as a figure or model the priesthood of the mysterious Melchizedek, meaning “Righteous King or King of Peace,” Heb 7:1-3. This ancient priest of God Most High appears only in Genesis and in Ps 110, and in Hebrews. The psalms were held to be written by David, the great king. But in Ps 110, God tells the king that he is also a priest, not because of his lineage (David was from the tribe of Judah, not Levi), but according to the “model” of Melchizedek, the ancient, righteous, king-priest; see Mk 12:35-37; Heb 7:11-14.

Jesus' body and blood offered for us was *re-presented* by the broken bread and the wine poured at the Last Supper. He gives us spiritual life, but not to the neglect of our physical life, as the gospel reading indicates.