

The Body and Blood of Christ (Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, Year C)

Genesis 14:18-20—The Bread and Wine of Melchizedek

1. Melchizedek: “King of Righteousness” (Hebrew *melchi-zedek*) (14:18)
2. Salem: “king” of Salem; “Salem” = “Zion/Jerusalem” (see Ps 76:1-2) (14:18)
3. Bread and Wine: brought out “bread and wine” (= unbloody sacrifice)
4. Priest: first man to be called “priest” (Hebrew *kohen*) in the Bible (14:18)
5. Thanksgiving: offers blessing of thanksgiving for Abram’s victory (14:19)
6. Tithe: Abram gave him “a tenth of everything” (Num 18:21-24)

Psalm 110—A Priest Forever, according to the Order of Melchizedek

1. Davidic: “a Psalm of David” (heading)
2. Zion: king of Jerusalem (= Zion) (v. 2)
3. Melchizedek: “a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek” (v. 4)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26—The Words of Institution

1. Bread: this is “my body” for you (11:24)
2. Wine: this is “the new covenant” in my “blood” (11:25)

Luke 9:11-17—The Feeding of the 5,000 in the Wilderness

1. Desert/Wilderness: a “lonely place” or “desert” (Greek *erēmos*) (9:11; cf. Luke 4:1)
2. 5 Loaves, 2 Fish: how to feed “about five thousand people”? (9:14)
3. New Exodus: why make them sit down in “companies,” about “fifty each” (9:14)?

Moses chose *able men out of all Israel*, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, of hundreds, *of fifties*, and of tens. And they *judged the people* at all times... (Exod 18:25-26; cf. *Damascus Document*^a 12:21-13:2)

4. The Last Supper: feeding of the 5,000 anticipates the Last Supper:

Feeding of the 5,000

1. Jesus “taking” the five loaves
2. Jesus “blessed” the loaves
3. Jesus “broke” the loaves
4. Jesus “gave” them to the disciples

The Last Supper

1. Jesus “took” the bread
2. Jesus “blessed” the bread
3. Jesus “broke” the bread
4. Jesus “gave” it to the disciples

The Living Tradition

Cyprian of Carthage: Likewise, in the priest Melchizedek, we see *the sacrament of the sacrifice of the Lord prefigured* according to what the divine Scripture testifies and says: “And Melchizedek, the king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, for he was a priest of the most high God, and he blessed Abraham.” [Gen 14:18]... For who is more a priest of

the most high God than our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered sacrifice to God the Father and offered the very same thing that Melchizedek had offered, bread and wine, that is, *actually, his body and blood?* (Cyprian of Carthage, *Letters* 63.4; translation Sr. Rose Bernard Donna)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (*Corpus Christi*, Year C)

1. How does the sacrifice of Melchizedek in Genesis 14 prefigure the sacrifice of Christ?

2. How does the feeding of the 5,000 contain echoes of the exodus from Egypt?

3. How does the feeding of the 5,000 point forward to the Last Supper?

For Further Study

1. Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York: Image, 2011). Studies the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist in light of ancient Jewish traditions about the Passover lamb, the Manna from Heaven, and the Bread of the Presence.