

Solemnity of Corpus Christi.

June 18-19, 2022 Year “C”

Readings: Genesis 14: 18-20; 1 Cor. 11: 23-26; Luke 9: 11-17

Ecce Panis Angelorum

Ecce panis Angelórum,
Factus cibus viatórum:
Vere panis filiórum,
Non mitténdus cánibus.

Behold the bread of angels
which has become the food of pilgrims;
see the children’s bread from heaven,
which on dogs may not be spent.

Today, the typical dog owner spends nearly \$1,500 per year on their pet’s basic expenses. Add in trips to the veterinarian or boarding your pet while on vacation, and it is significantly more. And trust me, I love animals– but such a hymn may appear to some as downright fightin’ words! Aquinas is almost assuredly referencing the account of the Canaanite woman who asks Jesus to heal her daughter in St. Matthew’s Gospel (Matt. 15:22-28)

Jesus responds, “It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.”

This stanza taken from the *Lauda Sion*, the ancient Sequence in honor of the Eucharist. They express in poetic terms what we can only believe through faith. The liturgical text was composed by St. Thomas Aquinas in 1264 at the request of the Pope Urban IV himself, gave poetic voice to our most fundamental beliefs about the Eucharist, the Bread of Angels.

One might ask the Angelic Doctor how he can write of “bread of angels” when angels do not eat, and that is a good question! He responded that the angels do feed *spiritually* on Christ – adoring Him in Heaven:

...in this way the angels eat Christ spiritually inasmuch as they are united with Him in the enjoyment of perfect charity, and in clear vision (and this is the bread we hope for in heaven), and not by faith, as we are united with Him here.¹

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. 80, Art. 2

While we do not enjoy such a clear vision, the Church in her wisdom has given us tools to help overcome our natural limitations. The sacred liturgy is one such way. A Eucharistic procession gives visible witness to our faith. In keeping with the ancient axiom, the Law of Prayer is the Law of Belief (*Lex orandi, lex credendi*), it is fair to say that this hymn beautifully expresses a deep faith in the gift which the Eucharist provides. Because our eyes cannot see anything out of the ordinary, it remains a constant temptation to speak or treat the Eucharist in a manner less than it is due.

Vatican II's Constitution on the Liturgy states:

In the earthly liturgy, by way of foretaste, we share in that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as Pilgrims, and in which Christ is sitting at the right hand of God ... we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the Heavenly army...²

So, the Eucharist is a foretaste of heaven. After a period in which people absented themselves too frequently from the Eucharist, Eucharistic Processions reawakened in the hearts of the faithful the sublime gift. God is not unapproachable; Jesus invites us to the Banquet. Yes, we need to be properly disposed- that is our job. The Lord's job is to invite and offer us the grace that helps us navigate the stormy seas of life.

Ecce panis Angelorum, factus cibus viatorum. "Lo, upon the altar lies/
Hidden deep from human eyes,/ Bread of angels from the skies..."
Our sight has not failed. But the eyes of faith tell us something different. Do we dare to believe this seeming absurdity-that God can change simple gifts of bread and wine into the flesh and blood of the Lord?

If God can make the moon and the stars, and create the entire world out of nothing, surely he can also make sacramentally present to us the Body and Blood of His Son. Today, we offer profound thanks for this great gift. May we feast upon the bread of angels and become more like Jesus.

² Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" paragraph # 8