

Body and Blood of Christ “A” Cycle June 17-18, 2017 Fathers’ Day

James Walsh was an American Maryknoll missionary priest and later a bishop serving in China for almost 40 years and instrumental in bringing many of his beloved Chinese into Christ’s Church. After the communists came to power he was harassed and finally sentenced to twenty years in prison. He was expelled in 1970 and died in Maryknoll headquarters in New York State in 1981.

In his memoirs, Bishop Walsh tells about his sufferings and privations, the endless interrogation, and accusations he endured. What sustained him was his faith. He recounts of how he was able to celebrate Mass secretly. He would hoard scraps of bread from the meager meals and would pray the Mass from memory as best he could remember, repeating the words of Jesus: “this is my Body, do this in memory of me.”

The Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist which we receive so often and take perhaps for granted is the most important sustainer and nourisher of our faith. It is most fitting then that we set aside a special feast to honor and focus upon our attention on this great gift.

The Scripture readings for today focus on the Lord’s protecting, nourishing, and uniting his people. The first reading, from the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy tells us of the manna with which God fed his people during their escape from slavery in Egypt and their arduous journey through the barren desert on their way to the promised land.

In the Gospel, we hear that Jesus gives his own flesh and blood, his very life so that his disciples will be nourished spiritually with his life within them that will bring them to eternal life. Jesus is very emphatic despite some of the disciples’ objections. At every Mass, we do what Jesus instructed his disciples to “do this in memory of me.” The bread and wine truly become his precious body and blood.

It is no wonder then, that enemies of the Church, have attacked priests and invaded Churches to desecrate the Holy Eucharist. They know that the Eucharist fosters the faith, and that without priests to celebrate, there can be no Eucharist and no Church.

Like Bishop Walsh, we are thankful that we have faith, and happily unlike him in Communist China, we are free to celebrate and receive the Holy Eucharist without restraint. Sadly today, too many Catholics do not come to Sunday Mass to be nourished by the Lord's Body and Blood. Pray for them and encourage them to come. May the Lord Jesus in this most holy sacrament continue to nourish us and bring us to eternal life.