



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller



Homily: The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
June 22, 2014

We are invited to a journey this morning, a pilgrimage, a procession – from the wilderness to the Promised Land! We go together in faith, led by the Holy Spirit, nourished by the Word of God and the Body and Blood of Christ.

We begin in the wilderness. After the Exodus from Egypt the people of God wandered in the vast and terrible Sinai wilderness for forty years. They experienced snakes and scorpions, a parched land, the only water provided miraculously from a rock. God fed them each day with “bread from heaven,” the manna. In the desert they learned that they could not survive on their own resources. They were not self-sufficient, but, rather, totally dependent on God.

The wilderness represents the hard times in our lives when we depend on God’s help for mere survival – an arid time, a time of intense hunger and thirst, a time of dangers on all sides. Perhaps you are experiencing the wilderness these days. If so, learn from the people of old to trust God. Or perhaps you are doing quite well today, living in a kind of “promised land” of prosperity and security. If so, remember the wilderness. Don’t forget it! In fact, you and I frequently back and forth across the frontier of the wilderness and the Promised Land. God is with us at every step of our journey. He gives us all we need in our daily life. He does not abandon us. He feeds us with his word and the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ.

In today's Gospel Jesus identifies himself with the "bread from heaven" telling us clearly and insistently that we must eat his Body and drink his Blood in order to have eternal life. His contemporaries were scandalized by his words, and many walked away from him in disbelief. But some stayed with him and sat with him at the Last Supper when he broke bread, said the blessing, and gave it to them saying "This is my Body. Take and eat it." He then took a cup of wine, gave thanks to his heavenly Father, and gave it to his disciples saying "This is my blood of the covenant which will be shed" for all. Remember this is only hours before his passion and death on the Cross where he shed his Precious Blood for the life of the world. His death overcame death itself. It was a victory over the forces of evil. It has saving, reconciling power. It is a wonderful gift from our crucified and risen Savior. We remember and celebrate that gift every time we celebrate the Eucharist together, especially on this Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

St. Paul reminded the church at Corinth -- and us gathered here this morning -- that "the bread we break" is "a participation in the body of Christ." That's right -- we are the Mystical Body of Christ here and now -- in union and communion with our fellow believers throughout the world and throughout history. And the "cup of blessing that we bless" -- the chalice of the Precious Blood -- is "a participation in the blood of Christ." This calls us to solidarity with all who suffer and are oppressed throughout the world -- our sisters and brothers in Syria and Iraq, our fellow Christians in Nigeria, those suffering persecution and martyrdom because of their faith, our undocumented sisters and brothers, and, especially, the thousands of unaccompanied children who are crossing our Southwest border in search of the Promised Land -- a place of peace and safety, a place of welcome and belonging, a new home where they will have a place at our table -- at God's table with us. They, too, are part of the Mystical Body of Christ!! The Body and Blood of Christ remind us of this truth of our faith.

Our celebration this morning will include a procession through the streets of San Antonio. As we walk together in faith, let us remember the wilderness. Let us walk in solidarity with all those who experience the terrors of the desert today. Let us express

our gratitude for God's great gifts, "bread from heaven." Let us recommit to a missionary spirit in order to share the risen Lord and his gospel – the word of God's love – with all our sisters and brothers, without exception. Let us be determined to strive for justice and peace.

The Eucharist is a foretaste of the messianic banquet in the world to come. We hope and trust eventually to be in the true Promised Land at table with God forever. May Our Lady, *la Morenita*, be with us always on our journey, our procession back and forth across the border of the wilderness and the Promised Land. May she help lead us back to our eternal home by her example and maternal care.