

PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

CORPUS CHRISTI, YEAR C

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 11: 23–26

Today's reading from Corinthians constitutes the earliest written account we have of the Last Supper. Later, the Synoptic Gospels also relate this episode, although each is slightly different. Luke's account is the closest to that of Paul.

Paul is writing to those in Corinth because there have been reports of conflict and strife in the new Christian community. Here he addresses the difficulties encountered around breaking bread together. For him, there can be no Eucharist in a community where the members do not love one another. However, in a very hierarchical society where each person knows where they stand on the social ladder, problems have arisen. At meal times, it was usual for those of higher social status to have more food and better wine than the others, and it seems they also applied this custom to the Eucharist.

Relying on oral tradition (*'I received from the Lord ...'*), Paul reminds the Corinthians of the purpose of the Eucharist: a memorial of the Last Supper and a proclamation of the Lord's death until he comes again.

He uses terms charged with symbolic meaning in Old Testament writings; in particular, the reference to blood and remembrance, which takes his readers back to the Passover (Exodus 12: 14). In the last sentence, the 'you' is in the plural form, thus addressing not only all Corinthians, but also all of us.



The Feast of Corpus Christi (the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ) celebrates the gift that Jesus gives us in the Eucharist – his very self as our food and drink. In the Roman Catholic church in Britain and Ireland, the feast is celebrated on the Sunday after Trinity Sunday. Some other churches also keep it as the Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion.

Gospel Luke 9: 11–17

The miracle of the loaves and fishes

The food and drink Jesus shared with his disciples at the Last Supper prefigures the spiritual life-giving food of the Eucharist that we share today – and this sharing of food and breaking of bread also echoes the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish, described in today's Gospel. This event is a perfect example of God's provision for those who follow him in faith. Jesus's feeding of the multitude also reminds us of the Old Testament miracle of the manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16: 13–18).



And taking the five loaves and two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd ...

The twelve disciples have just returned from their missionary journey, and Jesus takes them away from the crowds to rest. They are in Bethsaida, a village on the far side of the Jordan, north of the Sea of Galilee. The crowds discover where they have gone and follow them; it is late and they are in need of food.



This miracle is recorded by all four evangelists, with Mark and Matthew recording two such events. Luke characteristically mentions Jesus's hospitality and his healing of the sick.