

Reflections on Body & Blood of Christ Sunday 26A.

Mass: Deuteronomy 8:2-3,14-16; Psalm 147; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; John 6:51-58.

Many people struggle to understand the central role that the Mass, or Eucharist, plays in the life of the Catholic, and Orthodox, community. For those of us brought up in the Catholic faith it often seems hard to explain. Why do we trudge every Sunday, come hell or highwater, to Mass? Is it just habit or is something else going on? We must be honest that most baptised Catholics do not attend Mass frequently, or even at all. Most of us have extended families who, when asked, would declare themselves Catholic, but never attend Mass. What is going on? The Church from the beginning saw the gathering of Christians for the Eucharist as the defining expression of being Christian. The catacombs in Rome are the clear examples of how far those early Christians would go to celebrate Mass, risking their lives. In our own country we know that many priests and lay people experienced or risked a terrible death in order to celebrate underground Masses. It must be a personal thing it has to be about relationships. As I grew up the Eucharist stopped being a 'thing' when I was about five. Leaving Mass one Sunday and doing a quick bob towards the door as I headed out, my dad stopped me, called me back, pointed towards the tabernacle, and said very sadly that genuflecting toward the door was no way to treat Jesus. I can still remember looking at the tabernacle and realising that Jesus was a person that I could hurt. From then on in my journey of faith, I began to love the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament. It is from such things that faith as a personal relationship begins to grow. That is, I believe, at the root of the Mass, what follows is a recognition of the relationship that we have with each other in the Eucharist. Sometimes a slow and painful journey of faith.