

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ

My beloved brothers and sisters, during his visit to the United States, Pope Benedict held a meeting with religious leaders of different religions in Washington, D.C. He urged these religious leaders not to just settle on points of agreement; rather, to discuss our differences with calmness and clarity; because, unless we work through them, we will not be able to return to full unity amongst Christians. One of the biggest differences between Catholicism and the Protestant denominations, is our Catholic belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Unlike our Protestant brothers and sisters, who believe that the Eucharist is merely a symbol of Christ's presence; we, and the Orthodox believe that Jesus, by His own words in chapter 6 of John's Gospel, is truly present, Body, Blood and Divinity! In fact, this feast day: Corpus Christi, was the result of a Eucharistic Miracle, which occurred in Orvieto, Italy, in which a priest, during the Eucharistic Elevation doubted the real presence, and the Host began bleed human blood onto the Corporal. To date, there have been over 179 Eucharistic Miracles, and many of them have been tested, and the human flesh, in every case is the same DNA, the same Blood Type; even though spread out over many centuries and long distances. The latest, is among the most spectacular, in Betania, in Venezuela, wherein the Sacred Host pulses to the beat of a human hearty and with Fire!

My beloved brothers and sisters, the Church has always believed in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist: He is really, and Truly Present- the God of Heaven and Earth, physically present in what appears to be just bread and wine. Surely this is difficult to believe- it was from the very beginning, that is why the crowds listening to His teachings about the gift He was going to give said: "This is a hard saying, who can listen to it!", and they went away from Him. It is still a hard saying, and it is the center point, the apex and zenith of our faith and belief! It is also the greatest of all gifts: Every time a priest says the words of consecration, a miracle takes place: Jesus, Himself in a mysterious way, becomes truly present under the appearances of bread and wine! That is why St. Paul tells us in the 2nd reading: it is "a participation in the body and blood of Christ." That is why Jesus repeats six times in seven verses: His flesh is real food and His blood is

real drink! How blessed we are: Jesus gave us the Eucharist because He desires this intimacy with us with Himself! In Him, you and I become what we eat! In the Eucharist, we already have the pledge of Eternal Life. That is why we must never, never take this gift for granted. That is why our behavior in the Church must be different than anywhere else- we are in the presence of our Lord and God! And this is what we have believed from the very beginning of the Church!