

**The Body of Christ
The Blood of Christ
Amen.**

**Christ the King
Body/Blood - 2009**

D. Philippart – *Saving Signs, Wondrous Words*

Have you ever been alone in a foreign place – or in a crowd of strangers – and heard your name called out? Even though you know that the person calling your name is not calling you but someone else with the same name, you cannot help but hear it and respond in some way: lifting your eyes, drawing a breath of anticipation, turning your head toward the voice. To be called by name is to be home.

And most of us have more than one name. Most of us have a first, a middle and at least one last name. Some of us have nicknames or pet names. Some of us have added “CONFIRMATION” names to the names we received at the font. When we love someone, there is no end to the names that we use: honey, love, my sweet...

So it is with God’s people, the church. Jesus has called us by many names: Salt of the Earth, City on a Hill, Light to the Nations. And in the liturgy, the Spirit calls us by more intimate names. In the liturgy, the first name that the spirit calls the church is “the Word of the Lord.” You may have thought that when the lector finished the reading, looking at us and says “the Word of the Lord,” she is referring to what she just read. She is. But she is also looking us in the eyes when she says that, because, in a sense, the church is the word of the Lord, spoken today, here, now. This is so because in Christ the word was made flesh, and in baptism our flesh is made word.

Wondrously, as if this is not endearment enough, we the church are called by holy names twice more. When we have lifted up our hearts, when we have given thanks and praise, when we have remembered how Christ loved us to the death and was raised up, when we have called down the Spirit, when we have broken bread that is body and poured out into cups the wine that is blood, as we sing and come forward, all of us and each of us hears our two names spoken again: “The Body of Christ. The Blood of Christ.”

Think of it! It is not only the consecrated bread to which the minister refers when he says to you, “The body of Christ.” It is that and more. (With God there is always more.) It is to us, the church, that he also refers. And it is to you, a baptized Christian, another Christ, that she says, “The Body of Christ.” And it is to this action of sharing, of feeding and being food, to which he refers: the Body of Christ.

To accept such a great mystery – that this bread, as ordinary as it is, has become Christ’s body; that we, as fractured a church as we are, have become Christ’s body; that I, as unworthy as I am, have become Christ’s body; that this simple human gesture of sharing a morsel of bread builds and sustains Christ’s body — to accept such a mystery we say with all our heart, AMEN! Let it be done to us, to me, according to your word..

And so that the body may have abundant life and be strong, strong in the face of death, another minister presents to all of us and each of us the cup. She says our other name: “The Blood of Christ.” She speaks of this consecrated wine, she speaks of this church, of martyrs ancient and modern, she speaks of you. She speaks of this most intimate sharing, this simple action of sharing from a common cup that so profoundly seals our destiny and changes us forever.

I may not know you, may not know your others names or the details of your struggles. But bound to you by baptism, I take up the cup from which you have drunk, and I, too, drink, and another one drinks after me and another one after that until all have done so. That baptismal bond is being drawn tighter. We are one. Your struggles are mine. Mine are yours. And all is Christ’s—including the victory.

And we are changed — and are changing. We become Christ’s body, bread broken for a world that is obese with materialism and still dying of malnutrition. We become a leaven in the world’s bread, an agent of change that helps the reign of God to rise, fragrantly, like a loaf browning in the oven. We become Christ’s blood, wine poured out in sacrifice and in celebration, poured out for the sake of a world drowning in division and still dying of thirst, a thirst for union and *communion* . We become brewer’s yeast, the zest that unlocks the

extraordinary in the ordinary, the tingle that makes sober people giddy with joy, the sweet smell and taste of the vintage.

Such transformation, such transubstantiation — of the bread, of the wine, of you, of me, of the church, of us — such change is possible because Christ says so: “this — and you — my body. This — and you — the cup of my blood. Do this and remember me.”

Do this! Made bold by this command, let us go to the table with Christ. Let us go and fervently pray there, “Send your Spirit upon these gifts to make them holy, that they may become” — and by sharing them that we may be — “the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose command we celebrate this eucharist.” Then will the Spirit whisper through the church, calling each of us, by those names so dear to God: The body of Christ. The blood of Christ. And we say Amen!!

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