

THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

Your task is to ensure all the details are heard:
"Melchizedek," "bread and wine," "priest,"
"God Most High," "blessed," and so forth

Melchizedek = mel-KIZ-ih-dek

Salem = SAY-luhm

Deliver the "blessing" as if you were praying
it yourself.

Blessed / blessed = BLES-uhd

Pause before announcing Abram's generous
response and speak of it with admiration.

For meditation and context:

LECTIONARY #169

READING I Genesis 14:18-20

A reading from the Book of Genesis

In those days, **Melchizedek**, king of Salem,
brought out **bread and wine**,
and being a **priest of God Most High**,
he **blessed Abram** with these words:
"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
the creator of heaven and earth;
and blessed be God Most High,
who delivered your foes into your hand."
Then **Abram** gave him a **tenth of everything**.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 110:1, 2, 3, 4 (4b)

R. You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

The LORD said to my Lord: "Sit at my
right hand
till I make your enemies your footstool."

The scepter of your power the LORD will
stretch forth from Zion:
"Rule in the midst of your enemies."

"Yours is princely power in the day of your
birth, in holy splendor;
before the daystar, like the dew, I have
begotten you."

The LORD has sworn, and he will not repent:
"You are a priest forever, according to the
order of Melchizedek."

READING I

The encounter of Abram and the priest-king Melchizedek is brief and mysterious, an abrupt interruption in the long Abraham saga. Melchizedek's name, based on two Hebrew words, indicates the character of his kingship: *melek* means *king*, and *sedek* denotes *just or righteous*. His actions in this scene are expressions of his righteousness. Melchizedek engages in a religious ritual that includes offering of bread and wine and a twofold blessing. The god he serves is *El Elyon*, "God Most High." This is the chief god of the Canaanites, as well as one

of the many titles given to the God of the Hebrews (e.g., Psalm 47:3). As the highest of gods, El Elyon is the creator of heaven and earth. Melchizedek's bringing out bread and wine is likely an offering of thanksgiving for Abram's recent victory over the other kings, accomplished by El Elyon, "who delivered your foes into your hand."

Melchizedek first blesses Abram in the name of God Most High. This blessing is an imparting of the god's kindness, brought down to earth on those who are blessed. In the first episode in Abram's story, the Lord

blessed him so abundantly that "all the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you" (Genesis 12:3). Even Melchizedek would be blessed by Abram's presence. Melchizedek's second blessing, that of God Most High, is an exclamation of praise, a frequent opening to prayers in the biblical tradition.

Abram's role in this short narrative is minor compared to Melchizedek's. His one action is to give him a tenth of everything, a tithe-offering that is also an act of praise or blessing of God.

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhnz

Paul is writing to correct abuses that infected the Corinthians' celebration of the Eucharistic meal.

Paul stresses his teaching is "from the Lord." "Handed over" immediately recalls Jesus' Death and the sacrificial nature of Eucharist. Jesus takes, blesses, breaks, and gives. He does the same in today's Gospel narrative.

To "do this in remembrance" is to make him present among us.

This line is as poignant the second time as the first.

This sentence is spoken in Paul's voice; he points past the present to our eternal destiny with Christ.

The healings are another sign of the Kingdom's abundance; they're an important prelude to this story.

Don't take Luke's details for granted for they add great texture and humanity to the story.

The "deserted place" may symbolize the wilderness of our hearts.

Jesus places the responsibility on them, knowing full well they can't respond.

Now that the impossibility of the situation is well established, Jesus helps them see with Kingdom eyes.

Again, Luke's details root the story in concrete reality.

READING II

Paul is handing on a tradition that began the night that Jesus was handed over. This was a tradition already known by the Christian community in Corinth. They were already celebrating the Eucharistic liturgy, although in a manner that showed all too clearly their factions and lack of care for one another. To counteract their divisive behavior, Paul retells the account of the origin of the Lord's Supper, which was always to be both a source and sign of unity. Each time they "do this" in remembrance of the Lord, he is again present with them in the sign of

READING II 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

GOSPEL Luke 9:11b–17

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the Kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured.

As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, "Dismiss the crowd

so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here."

He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves."

They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people."

Now the men there numbered about five thousand.

Then he said to his disciples,

"Have them sit down in groups of about fifty." >>

bread and wine. Through their sharing in Jesus' body and blood, they are brought into communion with him and with one another.

Paul is convinced that the Corinthians should already know this. He had asked them earlier in the letter, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation (*koinonia*) in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (10:16). The communion of which Paul writes is an unbreakable covenant bond with Christ and one another. Paul explains further that because of their

communion in the "one loaf"—the bread that is Christ himself—they are formed into one body. Having reflected on Paul's understanding of the double meaning of "body of Christ," St. Augustine urged believers, "You are the body of Christ, and its members. . . . When you hear 'The body of Christ,' you answer 'Amen.' Be a member of the body of Christ, so that your 'Amen' may be true" (*Sermon 272*). Our celebration of Corpus Christi rejoices in Christ's presence in the sacramental signs of bread and wine, and his presence in ourselves, the body of Christ gathered in his name.