

THE FIRST READING IS FROM THE BOOK OF  
DEUTERONOMY

Moses spoke to the people: You shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

Do not forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know.

The word of the Lord

THE RESPONSE TO THE PSALM IS

*O Jerusalem, glorify the LORD!*

O Jerusalem, glorify the LORD!

O Sion, praise your God!

He has strengthened the bars of your gates;

he has blessed your children within *you*.

*O Jerusalem, glorify the LORD!*

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He established peace on your borders;  
he gives you your fill of finest wheat.

He sends out his word to the earth,  
and swiftly runs his command.

*O Jerusalem, glorify the LORD!*

He reveals his word to Jacob;  
to Israel, his decrees and judgements.  
He has not dealt thus with other nations;  
he has not taught them his judgements.

*O Jerusalem, glorify the LORD!*

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THE SECOND READING IS FROM THE FIRST LETTER  
OF ST PAUL TO THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT  
CORINTH

Brothers and Sisters: The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION .

Alleluia.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever.

Alleluia.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING  
JOHN ’

At that time: Jesus said to the Jews, ‘I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.’

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’

So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live for ever.’

## REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

Today's Gospel needs the account of the Last Supper to avoid the difficulty which the text suggests. John wrote his Gospel later than the others, filling out with stories and teaching which Matthew, Mark and Luke did not know so well. Sometimes stories were not told to prevent people like Lazarus from being arrested or beaten up by zealous opponents of the Christians.

There are two rules for understanding gospel texts - is it a message found throughout, such as love and forgiveness in which case it is worth taking literally but if very different it needs care explanation. John was happy to include the jaggedly awkward bits like today's gospel which would have astonished and horrified Jews who would never eat anything with blood in it – the rules for *Kosher* (pure or proper) food forbade it because blood was the life of the animal.

Jesus drew us closer to him through his body, in some way inaccessible to our understanding. God comes to us in a physical form. Bread and wine become his body and blood without any physical transformation. We receive this gift aware of its power to bring us to eternal life.

Jesus unites his gift to his gift of saving us from the consequences of our sin and opening the gates of paradise to bring us eternal life. In Moses' time God sent bread from heaven, Jesus had repeated the miracle of food by feeding 5,000 in the desert to show that he could as he is the Son of God.

Today we can enjoy this gift drawing us closer to him, strengthening us to live by his words as his followers. This gift is freely given to us, revealing God's plan of Salvation to bring us to share the Divine life. As we appreciate this gift, we can live in anticipation of what is to come. The more we respect it, the more we will follow in his path, our hope sustaining us as our faith guides the practice of our morality.