But Jesus said to them, "You give them something to eat" **(Lk 9:13).** And later we know Jesus offered himself as our spiritual food. The celebration of the Most Holy Body and Blood of our Lord is to rejoice and to praise our Lord for having given himself as our own spiritual food and drink in the Eucharist. And is also to help us realize ever better the absolute need we have of the Eucharist for our Christian life, both as individuals and as a community. The Body and Blood of Christ are offered as a sacrifice for us, and every time we reenact this sacrifice, we renew his sacrifice for us. The bread that is broken is the bread of thanksgiving sacrifice, and the blood that is consumed is the blood that ratifies the covenant between God and us. The Eucharistic meal is a reenactment of Christ's death, an anticipatory celebration of his coming and a thanksgiving banquet with him present.

St. Bonaventure says that St. Francis of Assisi burned with love for the Sacrament of our Lord's Body with all his heart, and was lost in wonder at the thought of such condescending love, such loving condescension. The Eucharist, for St. Francis, was the foundation on which his faith life was built. In his "Letter to All Clerics," in fact, Francis wrote that, "in this world there is nothing of the Most High Himself that we can possess and contemplate with our eyes, except His Body and Blood." For the poor man of Assisi, the Eucharist was both his compass and his journey's end. For St. Francis, then, the Eucharist is the primary way in which he sees Christ's continuing Incarnation in the world. It is the sign of the presence of Christ with the Church in His continuing salvific role.

Such is the importance of the Eucharist in our life. Just as food becomes part of the body of one who eats it, the same way when we eat the Body of our Lord from the Altar, we become what we eat; the Body of Christ, the Eucharistic people. The Eucharist is a call to and a grace for service. The Eucharist is meant to send us out into the world ready to give expression to Christ's hospitality, humility and self-effacement. We go out as individuals and as a community embodying Christ; his love, gospel, mercy and compassion.

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