

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

On the Sundays in August, our Gospel reading has been taken from the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel. It is in this chapter that Jesus Christ gives us his full teaching on the gift of his Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist. Unfortunately, many Protestants do not accept the clear teaching of Jesus that through the work of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine at the Mass truly become His Body and Blood. For this reason it is very important that we understand this teaching ourselves and are able to share it with others.

The passage below is from a book called "Stunned by Scripture: How the Bible Made Me Catholic" (2018) by Prof. John Bergsma. Dr. Bergsma is a former Protestant minister who now teaches Sacred Scripture at Franciscan University in Steubenville. Through his study of the Bible and the writings of the earliest Christians, he came to the conviction that we Catholics have always held, that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ.

With my prayers,
Father Conley

So, we know from the earliest times it was the custom to read the Gospels ("the memoirs of the apostles") at the Eucharistic celebration (now called Mass). Observe what Justin Martyr further says about the Eucharist and the Gospels:

And this food is called among us *eucharistia*, of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things that we teach are true...For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but...we have been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, *is the flesh and blood of that Jesus* who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, *which are called Gospels*, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do in remembrance of Me, this is My body"; and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood"; and gave it to them alone. Now, I ask every contemporary Christian to ponder the following scenario: When the early Christians gathered on the first day of the week for the Eucharistic Celebration as Justin Martyr describes, and they read "the memoir of the Apostle John," or the Gospel of John, and came to the following passage-

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; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:53-54)

-is it plausible that they would *not* see the obvious line of connection to the Eucharist they were about to consume? I don't think so.

I submit to you that there is *no way* the early Christians *did not* read John 6 in a Eucharistic sense, since they habitually read the Gospel *at the Eucharistic celebration!* Moreover, I submit to you there is *no way* the author of the Gospel *did NOT realize* how his words would be understood by early Christians. In other words, John had to have known the early Christian community would understand John 6 to be stressing the necessity of Eucharistic communion, and therefore *must*

have intended the text to communicate that point. Both as a scholar and a believer, I find this argument – the argument from the early Christian community's understanding of John 6 – to be the most compelling reason for accepting the Bread of Life discourse in John 6 as, ultimately, a statement concerning the Eucharist.

I know about attempts to argue that "eating [Jesus'] flesh and blood" are just metaphors for believing in Jesus. But the concept of eating flesh and blood is universally negative in the Old Testament. Take the time to look up the passages where "eating flesh and blood" are described. You will find it's either forbidden (Gen 9:4; Deut 12:16,23) or being used as an idiom for the repulsive violence of warfare and judgment (Deut 32:43; Isa 49:26; Jer 46:10; Ezek 39:17). It's highly unlikely that Jesus would pick such a negative concept to be used as a metaphor for something like "trust" or "faith" when speaking to the Jews who knew the Scriptures.

Moreover, the direction of Jesus' argument in John 6 does not move toward metaphor, but rather toward physicality. Jesus becomes more concrete, not less so, in the course of the chapter. For example, as the Bread of Life discourse moves to its conclusion, Jesus stops using the general Greek word "to eat" (*estho* or *phago*, depending on tense) and adopts the Greek word for "munch, chew, gnaw," which is *trogo*. Here is the climactic passage of the Bread of Life discourse translated to bring out the force of the Greek verb:

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you chew [Greek *trogo*] the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who *chews* my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who *chews* 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 he who *chews* me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who *chews* this bread will live forever." (John 6:53-58)

Note how emphatic Jesus is. *Four times* (vv.5,54,57 and 58) he repeats essentially the same point: "You need to chew my flesh to live forever." A purely symbolic sense seems excluded by verse 55: "For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink."

I have come to believe that the New Testament Scriptures themselves are completely clear on the point that the Eucharistic bread and wine simply are the flesh of Jesus. This is the plain sense of all the texts in the New Testament that discuss the Eucharist, and Protestants pride themselves on taking the Scriptures in their plain sense. Nonetheless, if it were the case that all the early Christian Fathers explained to the early Church that these apparently obvious texts needed to be taken in a symbiotic sense, I would accept it. However, that is precisely what we do *not* find.

THE WILD GOOSE: Discovering a Deeper Relationship with the Holy Spirit, this Thursday, Aug. 23, from 6:30-8:45 in the hall. *The presentation will be "The Spirit of Adoption." Come and learn how God has made us His sons & daughters through the Spirit.* Dinner is included. You can sign up by contacting Fr. Conley at 301-870-2220 ext 13 or frconley@comcast.net

BECOMING CATHOLIC OR "MORE" CATHOLIC - If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a full member of the Catholic Church by receiving all of the sacraments of Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation, please contact Fr. Conley or Sue Wolfe. Classes begin in the Fall.

CATHOLICISM FOR ADULTS

Monday, Sept. 10th from 7 to 8:30pm in the Notre Dame Center.

Come and learn more about the Faith. We will begin with *A Quick Journey through the Bible*. After these six sessions, which will greatly improve your understanding of the Bible, we will discuss the Creed, the Sacraments, and the way of following Jesus Christ. The cost for materials is \$20. You can sign up in the foyer or by contacting Fr. Conley or Sue Wolfe.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING WILL BE THIS MONDAY, AUGUST 20TH AT 7:00PM.

IGNITE MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP –

6th, 7th and 8th grade - We'll have our 2nd Annual trip to River Valley Ranch in Manchester, MD, for their Fall Youth Retreat.

The trip was a huge success last year, and we're looking forward to another great experience in nature, in Christ and in each other.

We'll leave SMB on Friday, September 7th at 4:30, and return to SMB on Sunday afternoon, September 9th. We'll attend mass Sunday morning at St. Bartholomew in Manchester. Cost is \$150 per camper, which includes programs, meals, activities, and housing accommodations. We'll need a \$50 deposit by August 20th.

Please contact Karen Krechman at karen.krechman@gmail.com or 301-751-3200 for more information.

MARYLAND STATE COUNCIL KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

is having their 49th Annual Car Raffle. The drawing will be on Saturday, October 6th in Linthicum, Md. Grand Prize is a 2019 Ford Mustang or \$18,000 Cash Option, 2nd Prize is an iPad Air, 3rd Prize is a \$200 gift card. Tickets are \$1 each. Benefit of the Charity and Scholarships Programs.

TV MASS -

Do you know someone who can't get to Mass? Please tell them about the Sunday TV Mass, which is produced by the Archdiocese of Washington and taped in the Crypt Church of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. It is a wonderful ministry for those members of our Catholic family who are unable to be physically present with a local worshiping community for the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy. The Mass airs every Sunday at 10:30am on WDCW-50. Dish or Direct TV subscribers: Ch. 50. Comcast: Ch. 3 in Southern Maryland.

KNOW OF PARISHIONERS WHO ARE

HOMEBOUND? Please contact Fr. Conley or Sister Theresa at the rectory so we can minister to their spiritual needs.

COME TO THE FAIR & SHARE YOUR FAITH

The Charles County Fair is being held from Thursday, Sept 13th through Sunday the 16th. The parishes of Charles County have banded together to sponsor the Catholic Information Booth at the Fair. Our parish is committed to staffing the booth from 9am to 1pm on Saturday, September 15th.

Volunteers are needed. Come and show that you are proud to be Catholic! If you can help, contact Fr. Conley at 30-870-2220 ext 13 or frconley@comcast.net

MASS PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAM The little ones of the parish are invited to join us for some Sunday fun and learning at the St. Mary's Angels, Mass Pre-school program for ages infant-five years (infant spots limited) at the 10:00 am Mass. Parents can attend Mass each Sunday, while your children interact with other children in a religious atmosphere. The program will start in September. Don't miss out on the fun and a free service. RSVP: Lisa Shumaker smbacct@comcast.net, or (301)870-2220 ext. 11

9TH ANNUAL CRAB FEAST @ LOYOLA ON THE POTOMAC

Sunday, September 9, 2018 from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

Menu: "All-you-can-eat-on-site" crabs, fried chicken, hotdogs, hamburgers, potato salad, coleslaw, corn on the cobb, and watermelon, Beer, soft drinks, water.

Early bird tickets Price \$50.00 (by August 31)

Children 7-12 \$35.00, 6 and under free.

After September 1, Adult ticket price \$65.00.

Contact Alice Case at 301-292-0819 or

alice.case@loyolaretreat.org

Please support our advertising sponsors. This week we recognize McKay's Food & Drug Store

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Parishioners, 10am Frank Perez Marasco,

12N: Clarissa Williams, **MON:** 8am Janine Burch,

TUES: 8am Jessie Chlysta, **WED:** 8am Rev. Winthrop

Brainerd, **THURS:** 8am Jessie Chlysta, **FRI:** 9:30am Wayne

Mullings, **SAT:** 9am Joseph L. Jones,

4pm Mary Kay Estep.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS:

Stephen Balenger, Mary Bowes, Deacon Gene Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Frances Card, Joe Cross, Agnes Curtis, Chuck Davis, Susan Welch Day, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Martha Gehring, James Gibson, Zynae Green, Judy Istvan-Windsor, Irma Johnson, Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Jim Middleton, Mary Emma Middleton, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Ryan Myers, Joseph Quade, Mary Reeves, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Eva Washington, Beth Weise, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:

\$7,340.25. The unidentified donations totaled \$474.00. We received \$115.00 for our School Support.