

There was a young girl watching her mother prepare a ham for Sunday dinner. Before the mother placed the ham in the pan to go into the oven, she cut off both ends.

Her daughter asked, "Mommy, why do you cut the ends off?"

The mother said, "Because that's what my mom always did."

The question having been raised, she began to wonder why her mom cut the ends off the ham. So the next time she saw her mother, she asked. And her mother said, "Because that's what my mom always did."

Again, the question having been raised, she decided to ask her mother the next time she went to the care facility to visit with her. She asked, "Mom, I cut the ends of the ham off --- because that's what I saw you do -- and Carol does it because she saw me do it. But neither of us know why. Why did you cut the ends off the ham?"

"Quite simple," her mom said --- "I always had a big ham --- and a small pan!"

Sometimes we do things -- and don't even know why we do them. Other times we do them, "because that's the way they have always been done."

There are probably more than a few things that happen during Mass that you may wonder why they are done. I want to talk about one of those today -- because it has something to do specifically with the blood of Christ -- but also the Body of Christ.

Most all things in the Eucharistic celebration began for a very practical reason -- and only later was given a symbolic reason for doing it. This particular thing which happens during the liturgy is one of those things -- that if you haven't noticed it, because you are so intently singing the song of Preparation (#694 today) -- certainly altar servers notice it -- and it's a good day just to say to our servers (old and young) -- thank you for the ministry you do at the altar.

Before the perfection of wine making -- before every box of Forenza or bottle of Barefoot -- tasted the same, and has the same texture and consistency --- wine was not so well made. Because of its heavy texture, it became customary in both secular and religious usage to dilute the wine with water -- to render it less strong.

That's why originally a priest poured some water into the wine at the time of the Preparation of the Gifts.

Now that we have those consistent boxes and bottles of wine --- that practical reason is no longer needed -- but years ago, there was already a symbolic reason attached to the action:

the wine and water came to represent the divine and human natures of Christ.

And so accompanying this action today is one of the most profound prayers I think is prayed in the liturgy -- but you never get to hear it as it is a private prayer said by the priest. . .

The prayer is: "By the mystery (*2nd time through* -- so we don't know exactly how it happens) of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." (Repeat)

It is a profound prayer which speaks of what we hope happens here Sunday after Sunday: Christ became incarnate -- became a human being like us -- so that our human nature may be raised up into the divine nature of God.

We become what we eat and drink -- by receiving the body and blood of Christ, we become more like Christ -- a little more divine -- and a little less human --- by every Eucharist we receive.

An idea captured in one of the Prefaces we use at Christmas: "For through Christ the holy exchange that restores our life has shone forth today in splendor: when our human frailty is assumed by your Word --- not only does human mortality receive unending honor --- but by this wondrous union, we, too, are made eternal."

Or in the words of St. Augustine: "O Wonderful exchange: The Son of God became human so that we might become like God"

Or St. Thomas Aquinas: “The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, --- assumed our human nature, so that he, made human, might make us humans--- like God.”

So today, let us eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood – so that we might have life within us.

Today, let us eat the Lord’s flesh and drink his blood that we might have eternal life, and be raised up on the last day.

Today, let us eat his flesh and drink his blood so that Christ may remain in us – and we in him.

Let us know that today, through this Eucharist, we share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

How blessed, indeed --- are we who are called to this supper of the lamb!