

Homily Notes for Sunday, August 5, 2018, 18th in Ordinary Time

Readings: Ex.16:2-4, 12-15; Eph 4:17, 20-24; John 6:24-35

1. Summary: Today's reading focuses on the Bread of Life producing faith and belief in the follower especially through the ministry of the Word. Next Sunday we will focus on the Eucharist as the Body and Blood of Christ. This week we focus on the importance of faith and evangelization for the effective reception of the Sacraments. This theme is necessary to overcome the lack of faith in many Catholics who have received sacraments but who have not been evangelized. There are more inactive Catholics in the USA than any Christian denomination.

2. A brief outline of John 6

John 6 has five parts which relate to the Eucharist.

1st – 6:1-14 - the miracle (which is the fourth of seven miraculous signs in the Gospel of John).

2nd – 6:24-40 – feeding on the Word of Jesus for belief (See Rom, 10:9-15, belief comes from the preaching of the Word). “It is written in the prophets, “They shall all be taught by God (v. 45).

3rd – 41-51: Jesus is the Bread of life. Transition from being taught to eating the bread which is the flesh of Jesus.

4th - 6:51-59 – “The necessity of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus.

The bread that I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh (in Greek, literally “munch”, Unless you eat of 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 on the last day” (vv 51, 53-54).

5th – 6:60 – 69 – rejection by many, insistence on the part of Jesus, and Peter's affirmation of faith. It is here, after many of his disciples left him, that he refused to back off from His astounding statements. It demonstrates that he meant this literally (See the CD, “The Jewish roots of the Eucharist”).

I. Looking at the Readings

3. The first reading shows us how God satisfied the hunger of His chosen people in the desert by giving them manna and quail. This provides a foundation for understanding the Eucharist.

The first reading reminds us of Eucharistic Prayer II.

“In the morning a dew lay all about the camp, and when the dew evaporated, there on the surface of the desert were fine flakes like hoarfrost on the ground.”

In the Eucharistic liturgy, form II, the priest says:

“You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

4. This reminds us that God is providing Himself as true food, food that endures for eternal life, manna from heaven, as he provided for the Israelites in the desert.

5. In the second reading, St. Paul advises the Ephesians to satisfy their spiritual hunger by turning away from their former evil ways and leading lives of love, kindness, compassion and forgiveness. This is essential for having the correct disposition for a fruitful reception of the Eucharist. Does this not need to come from preaching and teaching based on God's Word?

6. In today's Gospel we see how Jesus leads them on from the literal to the spiritual meaning. He says,

“You are looking for me not because you saw (spiritual) signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.”

7. They ask Him what work they can do and he replies, “This is the work of God, that you **believe** in the one he has sent.” “It was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.” And then Jesus makes the unique and bold claim: “*I am the bread of life; whoever **comes** to me will never hunger, and whoever **believes** in me will never thirst.*” Jesus was offering the crowd bread from heaven, bread that nourishes for eternal life, bread available to people who have faith in Jesus Christ.

II. Application: Jesus is the Bread that has come down from heaven, both as Word and Eucharist.

8. To understand Jesus as “the Word” which has come down from heaven, let us go back to the beginning of the Gospel of John.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race” (Jn 1:1-3).

9. What does “beginning” mean? This is before time began, before the world was created?

Who was there? God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Son is also known as the “Word” of God. In Greek a famous word for this is “Logos.” This means that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was God and was with God before creation began.

10. “All things came to be through him.” How did God create in Genesis? “Then God said.... Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...” Everything that was created was created by God “saying” it. It was first conceived in the mind of God and then it became, and it became through the “Word” (Gen 1).

11. Then, continuing in the Prologue to the Gospel of John it says;

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (v.14).

12. So in order to save us, God sent his Son who was present from the very beginning in Spirit, into the world by the incarnation. God came down and took human form through the “incarnation”, becoming Jesus, the Christ.” “Incarnation means “God becoming flesh.”

13. So it is that God came down from heaven in human form. This we celebrate as Christmas, the birth of Jesus as the God-man in the world. Note the communication of God from heaven into the world. Here we can see how God first came down to the world to save us. Now we can see that he comes down from heaven to be with us and to strengthen us by his Word and the Holy Eucharist in Mass.

14. At the Last Supper and in John 6 Jesus is talking about the meaning of the Mass and the Eucharist. During the first part of the Discourse on the Bread of Life, Jesus describes himself primarily in terms of teaching and belief. From v. 48 onward he describes his presence not as word but as “body and blood.”

15. How could this be true? Why would we believe it? If God formed the world by saying.... and it was created, does it not also make sense that something is created when Jesus spoke at the Last Supper, saying, “This is my body that is given up for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:23-26). This represents Jesus again coming down from heaven in the transubstantiation of the bread and the wine to be his real presence with us. In the Holy Eucharist we have the heavens open and Jesus becomes present. This is why the Mass and the Eucharist this is so holy and so sacred. This is why we take such care of the consecrated bread and wine which have really become the body and blood of Jesus. The heavens have opened and God has come to be with us.

16. You are all invited to the Tuesday evening study of the “Eucharist: Sacred Meal, Sacrifice, Real Presence” by Bishop Robert Barron. Mass is at 6:00, supper at 6:30 and class from 7:00 to 8:20pm.

17. Application Questions:

1. What are the principal parts of the Mass? How does the structure of John 6 illustrate this?
2. Is it true that the most important part of the Mass is the Communion?
3. Is the sacrifice of the Mass the same sacrifice as the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, or another sacrifice?
4. Is it true that the measure of the fruits of the Mass depends especially on the dispositions of those to whom they are given (See CCC 1098 & 1128)?