

## Homily Resources – 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time – 19 August, 2018

Readings: 1<sup>st</sup> Prv 9:1-6; 2<sup>nd</sup> Eph 5:15-20; Gospel Jn 6:51-58

**1. Central Theme:** Our Gospel reading highlights the Presence of our Lord in his Body and his Blood. This passage in John is key to understanding the Eucharist in depth. Here the Lord presents his presence in terms outside of Jewish understanding. This language appears to most people in the world as describing cannibalism. But it is not. It shows that the Eucharist is a participation in the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine.

**2. Structure of John 6 – “I am the bread of life.” John 6 has five parts** which relate to the Eucharist.

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

2<sup>nd</sup> – 6:24-35 (36-40) - feeding on the Word of Jesus. We must have belief in order to feed on the Eucharist.

3<sup>rd</sup> – 6:41-51 – Jesus is the Bread of Life who feeds (by teaching) all those whom the Father draws to Him. This highlights necessary preparation by teaching and listening to be ready to receive the Eucharist.

4<sup>th</sup> - 6:51-58 - the Eucharist is feeding on the flesh and blood of Jesus himself;

5<sup>th</sup> – 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 after this hard saying, that he refused to back off from His astounding statements.

(See the CD, “The Jewish roots of the Eucharist”).

**3. Reflection on the readings:**

**4. In today’s first reading** from the Book of Proverbs, Lady Wisdom, representing God, offers wisdom and understanding in the form of a rich banquet to all those who are willing to heed her invitation. The early Christians often identified Jesus as the Wisdom of God. They regarded the Eucharist as Wisdom’s banquet, where they shared in the divine wisdom personified by Jesus.

**5. The responsorial psalm** thanks God for His providential care and His close association with His people, and invites all to “*taste and see the goodness of the Lord.*”

**6. In the second reading**, Paul advises the Gentile Christians to show their gratitude to God for calling them, along with the Jews, to Christianity, and for giving them a share in Christ’s life. They will be able to receive this life by avoiding their former foolish ways, for example, *getting drunk on wine*. Instead they are to be Spirit-filled and their talk edifying, always trying to discern and do the will of God. If we live the lifestyle described here in Ephesians, we will not be attracted to the escape of drugs but live pure, holy, godly, joyful lives.

**7. In today’s Gospel** passage, Jesus asserts that eating the Living Bread, himself, allows us to participate in his life and is the inauguration of our eternal life with God. Jesus emphasizes the eternal-life dimensions of eating His body and drinking his blood. That means that those who have faith in Jesus have already stepped into heaven in this life, sharing in God’s own life and therefore in eternal life. Our participation in the Eucharist also concretizes and energizes our relationship with Christ and with one another.

**8. Remember that in the first part of the discourse (vv.35-51), Jesus presents himself as the Bread of Life, in the sense that faith and belief in him is food for eternal life.** In the second part (vv. 51-59) Christ reveals the mystery of the Eucharist: He is the Bread of Life who gives himself sacramentally as genuine food.

**9. To eat the Body and Blood of Christ!** These words have such a tremendous realism about them that they cannot be interpreted in a figurative way. And when Jesus was challenged about their literal meaning, he did not back off and admit that they were symbolic. He really meant it. How best can we understand it?

**10. Jesus really meant what he said. At other times he corrected his disciples to understand.**

a. **Symbolically:** “I am the light of the world” (Jn 8:12). This was to be meant spiritually. No one imagined Jesus as a candle or was upset and left. They knew it was symbolic.

b. **Symbolically:** “I am the gate for the sheep” (Jn 8-9). This is clearly meant spiritually. No one imagined that Jesus was some kind of a door on hinges.

c. **Really:** The raising of Lazarus. Jesus said that Lazarus was “asleep.” The disciples thought he was talking about ordinary sleep. But Jesus clarified, “Lazarus has died.” Jesus cared that people would understand him correctly.

- d. **Really:** concerning the Eucharist. Jesus said, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” When many found this offensive, Jesus pointedly did not correct himself. He said, “But there are some of you who do not believe” (Jn 6:64). He let them go away. The Apostles stayed even though they did not understand, but believed Jesus.

### 11. How are we to believe this?

- a. **Because Jesus said it and insisted on it.** God can do whatever he wishes. He did creation by “saying” and it was. If Jesus says it, then it is. But how are we to understand it because the bread and the wine still appear to be bread and wine?”
- b. **Using the philosophical categories of “accident” and “substance” can help us.** “Accident” means the appearance. “Substance” means the thing that it really is. For example, we can have a chair that is made of wood, or it could be made of plastic and steel. The materials, the appearance, is different but its essence is “chair.”

**12. Using this understanding we can see that the accidents of bread and wine remain, but the reality become body and blood.** Why might we believe that the substance has changed? First, because Jesus said it. Secondly, because of the history of tradition in the Church from the very beginning, from the Church Fathers, that it really became the body and blood of Jesus. Third, because there is a history of supernatural miracles attributed to consecrated hosts throughout the entire history of the Church (See *Miracles of the Eucharist*).

### 13. The testimony of History

- a. **St. Ignatius of Antioch** (Father of the Church, about 107 A.D.): “They remain separated (Docetists) from the Eucharist and prayer because they do not wish to admit that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and was resurrected by the Father (Smym. 7,1).
- b. **St. Justin Martyr** (Father of the Church, about 165 A.D.): The food converted in the Eucharist by the words of a prayer proceeding from (Jesus) – becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus who became flesh for us (1 Apol., 66,2).
- c. **St. Irenaeus of Lyons** (Father of the Church, around 202 A.D.): The bread over which one makes the consecratory prayer is the Body of the Lord and it is the Chalice of his Blood” (Adv haer. IV 18, 4).
- d. **St. Ambrose** (Father of the Church, around 370 A.D.): “This bread is bread before the sacramental words, but once it has been consecrated, the bread has been changed into the flesh of Christ. And before the words of Christ, the Chalice is full of wine and water, but once Jesus’s Words have worked, here is present the Blood of Christ, which redeemed his people.
- e. **This is hard to understand. Even the great St Thomas Aquinas said so:**  
“Come adore this wondrous presence, Bow to Christ the source of grace,  
Here is kept the ancient promise of God’s earthly dwelling place.  
Sight is blind before God’s glory. Faith alone may see his face.”

**14. Finally, we must affirm this by faith, but it really does make sense, and those who believe and obey find that they are blessed and protected.** Living a “Eucharistic lifestyle” brings great happiness and stability. This life is a correction for the drug culture of today. Consider the local Henderson County Sheriff’s Report in the Statesman, 8/16/2018. Twenty-two arrests were reported. All of them involved illegal drugs, mostly methamphetamine. Why do people use drugs? Mostly because something is wrong in their lives and they are suffering pain. But being a Catholic Christian brings a life-style that yields goodness, happiness and stability.

**15. What do Catholics believe concerning the Eucharist** (See CCC #1322-1419, especially ##1373-1381) for the “real presence”, 2177 [see 2174-2188 on the Lord’s Day]).

1<sup>st</sup> – The Eucharist is really the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus.

2<sup>nd</sup> - Christ is present by the words of the priest at the time of the consecration when the substance of bread and wine become the Body and Blood of the risen Jesus, but the appearances of bread and wine remain. We remember that substance is what a thing is; appearance is how it looks, tastes, and feels.

3<sup>rd</sup> - The Eucharist is truly a sacrament. By sacrament we understand a holy reality, actively sanctifying, when the grace arrives invisibly under a visible form (St. Thomas, Summa).

4<sup>th</sup> - The Eucharist is a true and proper sacrifice. That is to say, that in the Mass, the same but unbloody sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross occurs. Jesus doesn’t die again, but offers the same sacrifice to the Father (see Rev 5:6).

## **Guidelines for moral living (Eucharistic lifestyle) from last 2<sup>nd</sup> readings from Ephesians**

If we live a faithful Christian lifestyle, that is a “Eucharistic” lifestyle, how happy, stable, holy and prosperous will we be! Below are many of the qualities that St. Paul wants us to live by. These are from the Sunday readings for the past four weeks. If we were to be living by these guidelines, what would be the possibility of us needing or desiring illicit drugs?

1. Eph 4:1-6 – “I urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all **humility**, and **gentleness**, with **patience**, **bearing with one another through love**, **striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.**”
2. Eph 4:17-24 – “You must no longer live as the Gentiles (non-Christians) do, in the futility of their minds... alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance, because of their hardness of heart; they have become callous and have handed themselves over to licentiousness for the practice of every kind of impurity to excess...but that you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires... and put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth.” (See also vv. 25-29 for more).
3. Eph 4:30-5:2 – “All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ. So be imitators of God...and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God.” (Also read 5:3-14:
4. Additional guidelines, not in readings but in the Bible (Eph 5:3-14). “Immorality (sexual) or any impurity or greed must not even be mentioned among you, as is fitting among holy ones, no obscenity or sill or suggestive talk, which is out of place, but instead, thanksgiving. Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure or greedy person, that is, an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. “Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness, rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret...”
5. Eph 5:15-20 – “Live...not as foolish persons but as wise... Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord. And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.”

**If we were to change our lives to reject the evil behavior mentioned here and to live according to the way of God, what would our lives be like?** As baptized, faithful believers God will send his Holy Spirit to help us. This is why Jesus gives us his very body, blood, soul and divinity to strengthen us for the journey. He promised that, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

**Note the many Eucharistic miracles** which give testimony to its reality. The Church strongly recommends frequent, daily, reception of the Eucharist. The Navarre Bible presents this to us:

“In the same way as bodily food is necessary for life on earth, Holy Communion is necessary for maintaining the life of the soul, which is why the Church exhorts us to receive this sacrament frequently: “Every day, as is desirable, and in the greatest possible numbers, the faithful must take an active part in the sacrifice of the Mass, avail themselves of the pure, holy refreshment of Holy Communion and make a suitable thanksgiving in return for this great gift of Christ the Lord. Here are the words they should keep in mind: “Jesus Christ and the Church desire all Christ’s faithful to approach the sacred banquet every day. The basis of this desire is that they should be united to God by the sacrament and draw strength from it to restrain lust, to wash away the slight faults of daily occurrence and to take precautions against the more serious sins to which human frailty is liable (Secree of the S.C. of the Council, 20 December 1905)”(Paul VI, *Mysterium fidei*).

**From St John Paul II (The Great).** “The Eucharist is the secret of my day. It gives strength and meaning to all my activities of service to the Church and to the whole world. Let Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament speak to your hearts. It is he who is the true answer of life that you seek. He stays here with us: he is God with us. Seek him without tiring, welcome him without reserve, love him without interruption: today, tomorrow, forever.”