

## Homily Resources – 19th Sunday of Ordinary Time – 12 August 2018

Scripture: 1<sup>st</sup>: 1 Kings 19:4-8; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Ephesians 4:30-5:2; Gospel: John 6:41-51.

**1. Central Idea: Bishop Robert Barron presents three themes in his study on the Holy Eucharist. They are Sacred Meal, Sacrifice, and Real Presence. This Sunday let us be informed on the first two of these themes through the Word of God. Next week we will look in depth at why we believe that this is truly the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus. Then the following week we will reflect on our decision concerning this.**

### 2. A brief outline of John 6

**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 for belief. “Everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him (up on) the last day” (v 41). 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 all those whom the Father draws to Him. “They shall all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from Him comes to me.” (vv. 45). This highlights necessary preparation by teaching and listening to be ready to receive the Eucharist.

4<sup>th</sup> - 6:51-58 - the reality of Jesus being not just the Word, but becoming the very body, blood, soul, and divinity in the reality of the Eucharist.

5<sup>th</sup> – 6:60 – 69 – the time of decision. Jesus was rejected by many. Jesus refused to soften or back off from his words. Peter’s here makes a profound affirmation of faith. (See the CD, “The Jewish roots of the Eucharist”).

In the first part of the discourse (vv 24-47) Jesus presents himself as the Bread of Life, in the sense that faith in him is food for eternal life. Teaching and belief are the important ideas here. In the second part (vv. 48-59) Christ reveals the mystery of the Eucharist: he truly is the Bread of Life who gives himself sacramentally as genuine food (Navarre Bible, John, p.99).

### 3. Commentary on the readings for the day:

**The first reading** describes the physical and spiritual hungers experienced by the prophet Elijah. The bread of life Jesus speaks about is prefigured in this reading by the miraculous food with which the angel nourished the Prophet Elijah in the desert while he was fleeing from the soldiers of Queen Jezebel. After being nourished by the Lord, Elijah was strengthened for the long journey of forty days to Mount Horeb where God instructed him to continue his prophetic work.

**4. The second reading** calls on the faithful to be imitators of Christ Jesus, the “bread of life,” who handed himself over as a “*sacrificial offering to God*.” Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians that, instead of seeking satisfaction in anger, slander, bitterness and malice, they are to nourish one another with compassion, kindness and mutual forgiveness. Our offering of holiness, purity, care, and compassion are one form of the food that nourishes others in the Spirit.

**5. In today’s Gospel** we can see the development of faith in Jesus. He says, “I am the bread of life come down from heaven.” “It is *written* in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God. Everyone who *listens* to my Father and *learns* from him comes to me... Whoever *believes* has eternal life.” All of this is still consistent with the “bread” being “Word” or “building faith.” It still directs us toward the Liturgy of the Word. But in the last verse, Jesus changes everything when he says, “and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world.” Next week we will deal with the mystery of the Most Holy Eucharist itself. This week I want to focus on the ministry of the Word for necessary preparation.

**6. Bishop Barron treats the Eucharist as “Sacred Meal, Sacrifice, and Real Presence.**

**7. The Sacred Meal is a major theme of both the Old and the New Testaments.**

**8. Creation begins with Adam and Eve in the Garden.** Great feast. Only the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is forbidden. God wants us to eat and drink in communion with him and our fellow creatures, but our own sin breaks up the party. Isaiah uses the meal as a representation of the joy of heaven (Isa 2:1-5). The Passover meal is the most important meal of the Old Testament (Ex 12:14).

**9. In the New Testament, Jesus frequently gathered together with people in table fellowship.** The story of the conversion of Matthew, the tax collector, is a good example. Was Matthew converted before or after the meal? What might this teach us about evangelization? See

**10. The feeding of the 5,000 and of the 4,000 were messianic signs of the power of Jesus to feed us spiritually in a way that would lead us to heaven.** Barron says, "The hungry people who gather around Jesus are symbolic of the hungry human race, starving from the time of Adam and Eve for what will satisfy. In imitation of our first parents, we have tried to satisfy our hunger with wealth, pleasure, power, and honor, but none of it works, precisely because we have all been wired for God and God is nothing but love. It is only when we conform ourselves to the way of love, that we are filled."

**11. Barron also says, "To say "body" and "blood" in the context of first-century Judaism is to say "self,"** and thus Jesus was inviting his disciples to feed on him and thereby to draw his life into theirs, conforming themselves to him in the most intimate and complete way possible."

**12. Next week we will deal directly with how the Eucharist is really the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus.** Let us complete our reflection this morning with Bishop Barron's second reflection, that of "sacrifice."

**13. Bishop Barron's second emphasis is "Sacrifice".** "In a world gone wrong, there is no communion without sacrifice." All the covenants of the Old Testament were completed through sacrifice. Jesus, the Covenant in person, is both the priest and sacrificial victim, the offertory lamb, in the "once and for all sacrifice" (Heb. 9:26). Jesus came to be the suffering servant, prophesized in Isaiah, who through his sacrifice would atone for the sins of the world.

**14. Note that in the Mass we are not sacrificing Jesus again.** The Mass is an extension or re-presentation of the sacrifice of Jesus, bringing the power of his cross to be applied in the present. Jesus is perpetually in heaven, appearing "as a Lamb that seemed to have been slain"(Rev 5:6). Hence there is indeed a kind of collapsing of the dimension of time at the Mass (as the Jewish people experienced in the Passover), with the present meeting the past, and both present and past anticipating the future. St. Paul expressed this when in 1 Cor 11:26 he said, "Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes".

**15. Therefore, let us be aware of the great spiritual power and immense spiritual dimensions of our Eucharistic Celebration.** There is a lot going on here. There is great power present here. Let us be aware and have an active participation in this great spiritual drama, that it might inform and guide our lives toward happiness and fulfillment in this life and eternal joy in the life to come.

**16. He died arguing with them that the canisters were empty.** John Krakauer wrote a book about an expedition to Mount Everest which resulted in a great loss of life. One of the most unfortunate stories was about a young man named Andy Harris, who was one of the expedition leaders. He had stayed at the peak past the deadline that the leaders themselves had set, and as he was coming down, he was in dire need of oxygen. He radioed his problem to the base camp telling them what he needed and told them that he had come upon a cache of oxygen canisters left by some of the other climbers, but they were all empty. The problem was they were not empty - they were absolutely full, but because his brain was already so starved for oxygen and he wasn't thinking clearly, he died arguing with them that the canisters were empty when in reality they were full. The problem was that the lack of what he needed so disoriented his thinking that, even though he was literally surrounded by what he needed, he never took advantage of it. The very life that he needed he held in his hand. He just didn't take it. What oxygen is to the body the Bread of Life is to the soul. Without that bread, you will never satisfy your real spiritual hunger which is why every day we need to feed daily on the bread of the Word of God and the Holy Eucharist.