

“Jesus, the Living Bread”

Reading 1: Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20

Reading 2: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Gospel: John 6:51-58

Gospel Reading: John 6:51-58

Jesus said to the Jewish crowds: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” The Jews quarrelled among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Jesus said to them: “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. 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. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

Reflection:

The Jews wonder how Jesus can give his flesh to eat. In virtually all cultures, in fact there are few ideas more repugnant and few taboos more inviolable than those regarding cannibalism. Most people would rather die than eat the flesh of a fellow human being. The shock is greater for the Jews who have the greatest reverence for blood as the source of life. To come in contact with blood is immediately to become ritually unclean. While we can today understand the metaphor, for the Jews, with Jesus alive and talking to them, it is very different. Yet Jesus makes no apologies for what he has said. On the contrary, he tells his hearers that if they do not eat his flesh and drink his blood, they will not have life. Those who do eat and drink are guaranteed eternal life because Jesus’ flesh is real food and his blood is real drink. Jesus does not back down even when many of his disciples cannot accept the hard saying and decide to walk away. What do Jesus’ words mean? To eat Jesus’ flesh and drink his blood is to assimilate totally into our very being the whole way of thinking and acting of Jesus, his very person. “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him”. In our culture, a saying gives a good insight as to where Jesus is leading us; “You are what you eat.” This is exactly what Jesus wants for us, to become a part of him and to replicate in each part of our life and character his goodness. Our bonding with him, especially by sharing the Eucharist, will give us the grace, the strength, and the energy to grow into his goodness.

The metaphor, however, is not to be understood only in the context of “receiving Communion” at Mass. The Eucharist is a sacrament or sign of a much wider relationship with Jesus. It is primarily a community celebration of what we are – brothers and sisters who are the Body of Christ for each other and for the whole world.

Jesus’ flesh and blood come to us through the Word that we proclaim at each Mass or celebration of the Eucharist as well as during the sharing of the Bread and the Cup. But when we gather for Mass, we do not just talk about Christ; we become one with Christ; we are changed and transformed by the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection made present at the Eucharist.

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. Do you hunger for God and for the abundant life he offers you through Jesus Christ?
2. By uniting yourself to the death and resurrection of Jesus, what are you called to do that enables you to “bear much fruit” (Jn 15: 5)?