



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



SOLEMNITY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST, CYCLE A

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I am the living bread that came down from heaven..." John 6:51

On this Corpus Christi Solemnity, from the Gospel according to John, we hear proclaimed the "Bread of Life discourse." To the question that *"the Jews [that] quarreled among themselves"* asked, *"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"* Jesus responds that his flesh is like the manna given for the life of God's Chosen Ones, but with a mystical distinction. *"Unlike your ancestors who ate the bread that came down from heaven and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever."* Jesus Christ can promise eternal life because He is begotten not made, consubstantial with God the Father. In other words He is God that can do all things. Thus, in the inbreaking of the heavenly River of Life through His mystical Church, He now offers His Chosen People everlasting life.

Jesus insists on the literal meaning of His words, *"My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink."* This mortified His listeners. This mortifies many in the world today. That is why so many Christian denominations make the partaking of the Eucharist symbolic. But in the original Koin Greek, the word the Gospel writer penned for *"flesh"* is *"sarx."* My *"sarx"* (literally my flesh) is true food.

It was only after the death and resurrection of Jesus that the full implication of this *Bread of Life* discourse was understood. The Johannine community, the ancient Christian community of the late first century, placed great emphasis on this teaching. The evangelist John has passed down to us the profound understanding and wisdom of what Jesus is saying about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. By doing so we make real again all the events of his redemptive death, and we are *enfleshed* into the very life of God. *"Just as I have life because of the Father, those who feed on me have life because of me."*

Today, as we celebrate our doctrine of *Real Presence*, we can reflect on this great miracle, as we gain insight from the catechism:

"The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained." "This presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present." Ccc 1374

This reflection has its roots in what Bishop Robert Barron calls, "the disturbing and wonderful words of the Lord. It has always been a standing or falling point for followers of Jesus. He goes on to make this statement: "If the Eucharist is but a symbol of Jesus, who cares? But if it is the flesh and blood of the Master, nothing could possibly be more important." Let us ponder this week, and embed within our flesh the reality of the Eucharist, sacrifice of Christ, salvation of the world!

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

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 quarreled 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."*

The Gospel of the Lord

