



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

FAITHCIRCLES

WEEKLY SMALL
GROUP CATECHESIS

FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY BODY & BLOOD OF CHRIST • YEAR A



SUNDAY GOSPEL

Receiving Jesus

John 6:51-58

Jesus said to the Jews: 'I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.'

Then the Jews started arguing with one another: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' they said. Jesus replied: 'I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.' ■

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Fr Graham Schmitzer

God had personally entered the lives of his people enslaved in Egypt. He had called Moses to lead his people into freedom, and at Mount Sinai had established with them a covenant sealed with the blood of sacrificed animals. The terms of the covenant were spelled out the Ten Commandments which became Israel's constitution. "We will observe all that the Lord has decreed: we will obey" (Exodus 24:7), the people proclaimed. Not only did the covenant spell out the people's responsibilities, it guaranteed their rights. Day-by-day, God was with his people on their journey to the Promised Land, feeding them with the mysterious manna from heaven.

A second time, God entered his people's lives, this time in the person of his Son, the new Moses. A new covenant is proclaimed, sealed on Mount Calvary with the Precious Blood of the Lamb of God. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, the covenant is renewed and, like the Israelites of old, we, too, proclaim, "We will observe all that the Lord has declared: we will obey." It is in reality, the meaning of our Great Amen at the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer.

And to sustain us on our journey to the Promised Land of heaven, Christ offers himself as the true Hosanna from heaven. We are never at any point left alone on our journey. Christ has identified himself with us by sharing our destiny – he has walked the road before us and returns each day to accompany us.

Today's feast, with its traditional procession (a symbol of the journey of life), emphasises the continued presence of Christ in the Eucharist even after the celebration. Christ remains in our tabernacles so that the sick and the dying might be able to receive him. But he remains there, too, for our comfort. St Thomas Aquinas teaches that Christ is present in the Blessed Sacrament in the same attitude as he is in heaven. There, at the Father's right hand, he continually intercedes for us. "Father, forgive them; they know not what they are doing". "Father, I am praying for those you have given me, because they belong to you."

When we pray before the Blessed Sacrament, we enter into Christ's priestly prayer before his Father. And he is present in a continual attitude of opening himself to us, for he is present under the sign of "bread-to-be-eaten". ■

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS

The Gospel of John presents the discourse on the “bread of life”, held by Jesus in the Synagogue of Capernaum, in which he affirms, “I am the living bread come down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6:51). Jesus underlines that he has not come into this world to give something, but to give himself, his life, as nourishment for those who have faith in Him. This our communion with the Lord obliges us, his disciples, to imitate him, making our existence, through our behaviour, bread broken for others, as the Teacher has broken the bread that is truly his flesh. Instead, this means for us generous conduct towards our neighbour thereby demonstrating the attitude of giving life for others.

Every time that we participate in Holy Mass and we are nourished by the Body of Christ, the presence of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit

acts in us, shaping our hearts, communicating an interior disposition to us that translates into conduct according to the Gospel. Above all, service to the Word of God, then fraternity amongst ourselves, the courage of Christian witness, creative charity, the capacity to give hope to the disheartened, to welcome the excluded. In this way the Eucharist fosters a mature Christian lifestyle. The charity of Christ, welcomed with an open heart, changes us, transforms us, renders us capable of loving not according to human measure, always limited, but according to the measure of God.

And what is the measure of God? Without measure! The measure of God is without measure. Everything! Everything! Everything! It's impossible to measure the love of God: it is without measure! And so we become capable of loving even those who do not love us: and this is not easy. To love someone who

doesn't love us ... It's not easy! Because if we know that a person doesn't like us, then we also tend to bear ill will. But no! We must love even someone who doesn't love us! Opposing evil with good, with pardon, with sharing, with welcome. Thanks to Jesus and to his Spirit, even our life becomes “bread broken” for our brothers. And living like this we discover true joy! The joy of making of oneself a gift, of reciprocating the great gift that we have first received, without merit of our own. This is beautiful: our life is made a gift! This is to imitate Jesus.

I wish to remind you of these two things. First: the measure of God's love is love without measure. Is this clear? And our life, with the love of Jesus, received in the Eucharist, is made a gift. As was the life of Jesus. Don't forget these two things: the measure of the love of God is love without measure. And following Jesus, we, with the Eucharist, make of our life a gift. ■

TALKING POINTS

1. What does receiving the Eucharist – the Body and Blood of Christ – mean for you in your life?
2. Pope Francis writes that the Eucharist gives us the strength, courage and nourishment to go and love others as Jesus loves us. In what ways do you do this self-giving love in your life?

PRAYER POINTS

Pray for each other: Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them.

Reflect: Jesus, in the Eucharist, gives you his flesh and blood to eat as food and drink – as a way of becoming one with him. Spend some time asking Jesus to show you the ways in which you are already one with him in word and action.

Response: *Jesus we thank you for your life-giving presence in our lives.*

Closing Prayer: Jesus, you give us your body and blood as nourishment for our lives. Grant us, we pray, an ever deepening awareness of your love for us and the ways in which we can become more like you each day.

