

GOSPEL*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.’

HOMILY OF ST JOHN PAUL II*June 17, 1990 (Excerpt, translated from Spanish)*

We find ourselves before Christ truly present beneath the veils of mere material appearances. Christ-Bread, Christ-Wine: true food and true drink for humanity, which hungers and thirsts for the infinite. Only He, Christ, can satisfy the human heart's longing for eternity; only He, Christ, is the complete fulfillment of all its aspirations and the sure pledge of immortality. Only Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6) for those who eat His flesh and drink His blood.

Like the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room, we too today share this bread of eternal life, as we joyfully join our praise with that of the faithful throughout the world. We stand in awe, absorbed in adoration, before

the great mystery of our faith, and joyfully proclaim our gratitude for the sublime gift with which the Redeemer has enriched his Church.

How urgent is man's need for real bread! But how confusing are the indications he receives from all sides!

Alongside those who seek to offer him similar bread, whether through one ideology or another, there are those who would even try to dissuade him from such a quest, deeming it useless and futile. Both sides, however, agree that man is called to build his own destiny only within the horizon of earthly values.

Christ, on the other hand, chose to hide himself under the appearances of bread and wine to remind us that this food exists and that, even though situated in space and time, it transcends those dimensions to reach eternity: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." Therefore, only the Eucharist can give existence its full meaning and authentic value. Jesus has become our spiritual food to proclaim the sovereign dignity of humankind, to uphold its rights and just demands, to transmit to it the secret of the ultimate victory over evil and eternal communion with God.

Thus, in its evocative solemnity, today's celebration recalls this exultant message that impels us to embrace the intimate invitation to conversion and service, to love and forgiveness. It encourages us to be authentic imitators, in our lives, of what we celebrate in the liturgy.

Never forget : Christ, who nourishes us under the consecrated species, is the same one who comes to meet us in everyday events ; he is in the poor person who reaches out, he is in the one who suffers and implores help, he is in the brother or sister who asks for our availability and hopes that we will welcome them. He is in humanity: he is in every human being, even the smallest and most defenseless.

Profound mystery of life! Impenetrable mystery of love!

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: St John Paul II speaks of Christ as the true food who alone satisfies the human heart's longing for eternity; what does this reveal about why the Eucharist is not optional, but essential?



Heart: He describes a deep human hunger that the world tries to satisfy in many ways; where do you recognise that longing in your own life, and what do you turn to in response?



Hands: St John Paul II reminds us that the Christ we receive is also present in the poor and those in need; how can you live this week in a way that reflects the Eucharist in concrete love and service?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.