

I love to eat. I always have. And, I'm guessing, I always will. For me, food brings comfort. It fills and fulfills me. A meal is a way to enjoy time with family or friends.

When I think back to my teenage years, I can't believe how much I ate each day. I guess I ate like that because of how quickly I was growing. Today, I could still eat like that. But I don't. If I ate like that today I would simply grow horizontally.

This was my usual meal routine when I was in high school. I ate cereal for breakfast. I brought a lunch to school which included two sandwiches, fruit, and something sweet, like cookies. That lunch was inhaled by about 10 am. In those days, we had off-campus lunch. So, I would eat another full lunch at noon. When I finished afternoon sports or my job, I'd have a snack when I got home. That was usually another sandwich, cereal, or some fruit. Shortly after that, I'd eat dinner. I was seldom full after that meal so I'd have another bowl of cereal to top off the tank. At night, I'd have a snack – ice cream or something sweet. Thursday nights were extra special. After my classmates and I finished with choir practice we would eat pizza or cheesesteaks. With all that, I never seemed to gain any weight. Today, if I just look at a slice of pizza or a cheesesteak, I put on five pounds.

As good or as satisfying as all that food was at the moment, I always seemed to be hungry for more. That seems to be an apt metaphor for life. As good or as satisfying as various things are in life, we always seem to be longing or hungering for more.

St. Augustine seemed to readily grasp that part of our human condition when he stated almost 1600 years ago, “our hearts are restless, until they rest in you, O God.” Augustine understood that all things are fleeting. He observed that satisfaction with food or other things in life was temporary. The only good and lasting thing is Christ. We can be hungry, tired, or lonely. We can seek out things or ways which we hope will satisfy those desires. But the only thing that brings lasting satisfaction and fulfillment is Christ.

Recognizing our physical, emotional, and spiritual wants, Jesus gives us the only thing that makes us whole and complete. Jesus gives us the gift of himself. And he does so in a particular way by giving us the Eucharist.

Jesus says as much when he proclaims in the gospel passage we heard today, “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 Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life in me.... (W)hoever eats this bread will live forever.”

Each of us eats to live. But when we eat earthly food, we are only satisfied for a time. There is no earthly food that completes us. The Body and Blood of Christ, the Eucharist, is what unites us with Christ and joins us to heaven. Ultimately, we are made to be joined to Christ. And we were created to share eternal life with Christ in heaven. The Eucharist is what gives us both.

When we eat earthly food, that food becomes a part of us. But when we eat this heavenly food, the Eucharist, we become like

Christ. Participation in the Eucharistic banquet is also a participation in the ongoing banquet that takes place in heaven.

At every Mass, we repeat an action that may seem insignificant or that no longer catches our attention. As the altar is prepared for the Liturgy of the Eucharist, bread and wine are brought forward. Initially, that simple action might seem utilitarian. Those gifts are brought forward to be used and prayed over by the priest during the Eucharistic Prayer. But that seemingly insignificant action has deep meaning. First, the making of bread and wine should remind us of all that Christ has done for us. In order for us to have bread and wine, seeds are planted in the ground. Those seeds are dead, in a sense, and are buried in the earth. It is there that they rise again. They flower and are harvested or cut down. The grain and the grapes are crushed. The resulting flour is kneaded and baked. The crushed grapes are strained and stored in order to ferment. The bread is given over to us for our nourishment. The wine is poured out for us in order to drink and celebrate. This is what Christ has done for us. He died for us. He was crushed for our iniquities. He becomes life-giving bread and the cup of salvation as he offered himself on the cross. These simple gifts, bread and wine, represent the profound offering Christ made for us. And these gifts will become the Body and Blood of Christ which brings us eternal life as we partake of this sacred meal.

These gifts also represent us. They represent the times in life we are crushed and poured out for others. They represent our struggles and hardships. And they represent what we hope to become. As the gifts of bread and wine are laid upon the altar, we ask the Father and the Holy Spirit to transform them into the

Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. But, in a sense, we are placed on the altar along with the bread and wine. We place our hopes and dreams, our disappointments and shortcomings on that altar. And we ask God to transform us into the Body of Christ through the prayers and the sharing in this sacred meal.

Finally, our receiving the Body and Blood of Christ is never just for our own personal edification or benefit. Rather, what we receive – the Body and Blood of Christ – is what we are called to share with others - here in church and with others whom we meet beyond this church building. The gift we have received is the gift we are commanded to share with others.

On this Solemnity of Corpus Christi, we acknowledge what we receive from the altar. We acknowledge that Christ sacramentally comes to us to feed us. What a great and undeniably awesome gift we are given. This is such a stupendous gift that we can never keep it to ourselves. People who are in love don't keep that love a secret. They necessarily speak of that love and share the fruits of that love with those they care about. We are called to do the same regarding the Eucharist.

Today, we thank God in a special way for the gift of the Eucharist – the Body and Blood of Christ. This sacred food nourishes our bodies and souls. This gift unites us with our Savior Jesus Christ and forms us in his image. This gift is a participation in the heavenly banquet which continues for all eternity. And this gift is so remarkable that we necessarily have to share it with others. Amen? Amen!

### **All Faiths Are the Same**

- Many elements are the same; but many are different
- Eucharist is what make us different

### **Recognize What the Eucharist Is**

- Show it reverence
- Kneel down before it
- Say Amen to it
- Christ – really and truly present sacramentally – something that is somewhat veiled, but still really present to us

### **Eucharist is Source and Summit / the beginning and the end of all we do and are**

- Cannot live without a heart, brain, liver; essential for living
- Eucharist is essential for life – in this world and the next
- Priest celebrating Mass in concentration Mass

### **Why Go to Mass**

- To become like Christ
- To be Christ for others
- We go to Mass to be sent – to literally be the Christ we have receive for others

### **Bread and Wine Offered in the Procession / Laid on the Altar**

- Represents us; our struggles and what we are for others
- We ask that those gifts be transformed
- We are on that altar as well; we ask to be transformed
- We ask for the grace to be Christ for others
- We say Amen – so be it.