

Twentieth Sunday of the Year B

John 6:51-58

51 Jesus said to the crowd: '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.'

52 Then the Jews started arguing with one another: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' they said.

53 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. 54 Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood, has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. 57 As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. 58 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.'

Other readings: Proverbs 9:1-6 Psalm 33 (34) Ephesians 5:15-20

We continue reading from the sixth chapter of the gospel of John, which interrupts our regular reading of Mark's gospel on the ordinary Sundays of Year B. This is an opportunity to reflect on the words of Jesus about the Bread of Life, and indeed about the mystery of the Eucharist.

In today's passage the focus is on eating the flesh of Jesus. The Eucharist has throughout the ages been a source of controversy and misunderstanding. Many people have echoed the question of the Jews in this passage 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'

In speaking of his flesh and blood which he gives to us Jesus is employing a metaphor for his very self. Just as he gave himself in bread and wine to the disciples as a sign of his coming gift of his life on the Cross, so whenever we celebrate the Eucharist we receive the real Jesus, his 'body, blood, soul and divinity', his full self, but in such a way that the real gift is hidden beneath the physical appearances of bread and wine.

Sharing in the Eucharist brings intimacy with Jesus: 'he lives in me and I live in him'. This intimacy is the pledge of eternal life. The ultimate focus is on the gift of life. As Jesus draws life from the Father, so we draw life from Jesus in the Eucharist.

Am I prepared to accept the mystery of the Eucharist and by frequent reception to deepen my intimacy with the Lord?

Am I faithful to the commitment to attend Mass each Sunday and on the major feasts?

We pray that we will allow the Sacraments to lead us further into the things of God.

We pray that our communities may grow in love of the Eucharist and reverent celebration of Christ's gifts of Word and Sacrament.