

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – B  
August 11-12, 2018

What sets Catholics & Orthodox apart from the other Christian Denominations that we are familiar with? What stands out as our greatest treasure given to us by Jesus whom we identify with? It is the Blessed Sacrament in the Holy Eucharist which we receive in Communion in the Mass.

The last 3 weeks our Gospels have been from the 6th chapter of John's Gospel about the bread of life, describing what we believe the Eucharist is. St. John's Gospel is unique from the other 3. Matthew, Mark and Luke are called synoptic gospels, synoptic means "same eye". They basically tell the same events in ways that different people will need to hear them to understand what they mean for them. St. Mark is a very short Gospel, thought to be the first which was used as a brief outline of Jesus' life for preaching on which the other 2 build on. For example St. Matthew was written for Jewish members and shows how Jesus fulfills the Jewish faith with many references to prophecies, temple sacrifices and laws that they would be familiar with. St. Luke wrote to the Gentile, non-Jews, on how Jesus came for all peoples of all nations and mentions the ways Jesus helped non-Jews and deletes the Jewish references that they would not be familiar with. But John's Gospel was written last, after many years had passed, it is more a work of theology to explain what was mentioned in all 3 previously but maybe was not always understood. So it is interesting that in St. John's Gospel there is no mention of the giving of the Eucharist in his last supper - because they already heard it 4 times before in Matthew, Mark, Luke and St. Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Letter to the Corinthians. They were very aware of the event, but did they understand what it meant? So St. John added in his Gospel the discourse of Jesus at Capernaum on the Bread of Life to show us what we are receiving.

2 weeks ago we started with Jesus feeding the 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish with 12 basketsful left over. This was given by the little boy as he gave all his lunch, which seemed ridiculous for the need of so many. But because it was an act of love - like God is "Total & entire giving of self for the good of another," the boy totally and entirely gave his lunch out of love for others so that Jesus could make it enough. Here the people just ate regular bread. But they realized what a blessing this was. Here a young boy offered his lunch to Jesus and Jesus could feed 5000 with it with no work! Remember the work it took to get bread. You had to plant the grain by hand, cut it with a sickle by hand, put the straw on hard ground and walk oxen over it to knock the grain off the straw. Then on a windy day it had to be tossed into the air - to blow away the straw and chaff and allowed the kernel of wheat to fall to the ground. Then it was gathered and sacked until needed when the woman had to grind it between 2 stones to make flour. Then add water and yeast, kneed it, bake it in a wood fired oven, for which you had to chop the wood, so you would have something to eat. But if you stuck close to Jesus, only one person had to work, and He could multiply it to be more than enough for everyone. He would be a great king who could provide for His people. The point of the story is God who is King IS generous and will give us more than what we need - IF we are willing to let go and share what we have out of love - for God to work with. God can make it not a mouthful but a belly full with more left over if we come to Him in trust and have faith in Him. So with communion because the priest gets a bigger host than the people does not mean he gets more Jesus, or that you get less if the host is broken. No, you get all of Jesus, if a mouthful or a crumb, a sip or a drop. That is why the priest is so careful to receive every crumb and drop left over in the chalice or paten after Communion as it is all Jesus. Each received not a mouth full of food but a belly full with more left over besides. You really receive all of Jesus, if you believe it or not - as He also remains after in the Tabernacle - like the 12 baskets that remained. Jesus realizes that they want to make Him King so He and the apostles get in a boat and go to Capernaum to get away while the people are taking their after meal nap.

Last Sunday we have the follow up, the people wake up and realize Jesus is gone so they seek Him out and find Him in Capernaum. He tells them "they are looking for Him because they ate the bread, not because they saw signs to believe in Him." They said "What sign can you give us to believe in you?" Huh? He just fed 5000 with

5 loaves and 2 fish! What more do they want? They ask for Manna! Manna was the bread from Heaven that their ancestors ate for 40 years on their lifetime journey through the desert from Egypt to the Promised Land – given to nourish them, to give them life, on the way. This appeared each morning as the dew would turn into flakes that tasted like honey which fed and nourished them on the journey for that day. It was bread that they did not have to work for except pick up the flakes off the ground in the morning. There was no planting, harvesting, grinding or baking; it was bread from God, bread from Heaven. But Jesus tells them that if they are looking for a better bread than the ordinary bread that He multiplied, they should also look for a better bread than Manna. They should seek a Bread that really did come down from Heaven and gives life to the world. “Your ancestors ate Manna in the desert and died, I will give you a bread that if you eat it you will never die.” They want this bread and ask Him for it and He says “I am the bread that came down from Heaven for men to eat and never die; I am the Bread of Life.”

This week they are puzzled at this, what does Jesus mean? That Jesus is from Heaven? Aren't His parents Joseph and Mary? He tells us that He literally came down from Heaven, because He is God, unlike the Manna which was a gift from God in Heaven. “It was not Moses who gave you Manna but My Father who will give you the true bread from Heaven for you to eat and never die.” By calling God “My Father,” Jesus is saying His origin is from heaven.

So the bread we receive is not regular bread, like you make sandwiches with, that you buy at the grocery store that can feed and nourish you and give you life for one day. It is not Manna - the bread that God provided to feed and nourish the Hebrews for one day on their lifetime journey to the Promised Land. But it is more than that. The bread that we eat is not a symbol of Jesus, it is not just a reminder of something Jesus did. It literally comes down from Heaven from God and it is filled with eternal life as it IS JESUS, the eternal Son of the Living God - Who has eternal life and comes down from Heaven to feed us with His flesh and blood - to not only nourish us and give us life for one day on our journey to the Promised Land of Heaven, but to unite our bodies and our flesh with Jesus' eternal flesh - and our blood with Jesus' life giving blood so we have the same eternal life of God in our flesh and veins - that will live forever when our journey is over in the promised land of Heaven.

“Amen, amen. I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from Heaven so that one may eat it and not die. 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.”

So when we come into the Church we genuflect or bow before Communion because we are before Jesus in His living Risen Body in the Eucharist – to lower ourselves before someone who is greater. We are in God's physical presence as the apostles and people were in the Gospels. Jesus has eternal life - and He asks us to eat His body and drink His blood so we are fed with food that literally IS God who came down from Heaven to dwell within us here as Jesus did. We fast for 1 hour before communion from regular bread - all food and drinks (except water or medicines) - to recognize this is not just ordinary bread or even manna we are receiving - but something much more or more properly Someone more Who is greater. We are given food for the Journey, not to the promised land of Israel where the people lived their lives and died and passed their homes on to their descendants, but we are given food for the Journey to our new home in Heaven where we will never die - as we share in God's own eternal life as we united our bodies with Jesus' body and our blood with Jesus' eternal life giving blood. We then are not just creatures of God but Children of God, not living in a temporary human home on Earth in Israel - but a permanent home in Heaven. This makes all the difference in the world and makes Catholics and Orthodox Christians stand out as we do not just believe IN Jesus but know Jesus IS here, physically, living with us - feeding us daily with His flesh and blood from Heaven - so we can have not just a spiritual relationship of belief but a physical relationship with Him now into eternity - and never die.