

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to John (*John 6:53-59*)

Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For My Flesh is real food and My Blood is real drink. Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood remains in Me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the Bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this Bread will live forever." He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Jesus is the living Bread of eternal life

The Holy Eucharist - the most difficult teaching of Jesus. *On hearing it, many of His disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" (John 6:60). From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him (John 6:66).* It was too much for many of the Jews to believe that Jesus can really give His Flesh and His Blood to the people as heavenly food for eternal life. *Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?" (John 6:52).* Many of the Jews on hearing this teaching of Jesus on His Body and Blood were scandalized. They left Jesus. Jesus did not call them back to give a clarification of His teaching on the Holy Eucharist. The Jews understood it correctly and there was nothing Jesus could add to His clear literal teaching on the Holy Eucharist. Through the ages, God has been most gracious and kind to help the disbelieving human heart in granting many Eucharistic miracles showing that the Eucharist is truly the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ. The most famous and earliest documented of the Eucharistic miracles is that at Lanciano, Italy.

Christ prepares the hearts of His disciples for His gift of the Holy Eucharist. Though many of the Jews rejected Christ's teaching on the Holy Eucharist (cf. John 6:66), He did not spring this wondrous teaching on them suddenly without first preparing them for it. Earlier on, before His discourse on the Bread of Life Jesus performed the miraculous multiplication of the loaves (cf. Luke 9:10-17, Matthew 14:13-21, John 6:1-13, Mark 8:1-10) to prepare the hearts of His disciples for the gift of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper. This foreshadows the billions of souls that will be nourished by the Holy Eucharist down the ages. Following the multiplication of bread, Jesus performed the miraculous walking on water on that stormy night (cf. Matthew 14:22-36, Mark 6:45-56, John 6:16-21) to prove Himself in command of the elements, something only God can do. Jesus wants His disciples to understand He has the divine power to do what He was going to do at the Last Supper: transforming the ordinary bread and wine into His own Body and Blood.

Faith in the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist is the barometer of our Catholic faith. As Fr John Hardon S.J., Servant of God has pointed out, lack of clear understanding of the Holy Eucharist is indicated by: attending Mass tepidly, failing to understand that the Mass is the most sacred ritual and highest prayer of the Catholic Church; widespread reception of Holy Communion by souls who do not frequently cleanse themselves through the Sacrament of Confession with the risk of bringing condemnation upon themselves as warned by St Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27-30); neglect of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament on altars or in tabernacles in parishes, with very few visitors and adorers; and declining church attendances in many places.

The saints give us stark warning against sacrilegious reception of Holy Eucharist. St Ambrose said that persons who commit this sacrilege (of receiving Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin) "come into the church with a few sins, and leave it burdened with many." St Cyril wrote even more bluntly: "They who make a sacrilegious Communion receive Satan and Jesus Christ into their hearts - Satan that they might let him rule, and Jesus Christ, that they may offer Him in sacrifice as a Victim to Satan." Jesus said to St Bridget of a sacrilegious Communion: "there does not exist on earth a penalty great enough to punish it sufficiently!" (Ref: "Jesus, Our Eucharistic Love" by Fr. Stefano M. Manelli, Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, Chapter 3).

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, the Holy Eucharist is the gift of gifts of God the Father through His Son Jesus in the Holy Spirit, fulfilling many of God's promises: to save us and to bring us eternal life, to be with us always especially when we seek peace, comfort and solution to our problems, to show us how to love, live and behave, to nourish and strengthen us in our inner spiritual life, and a pledge of future eternal glory for those who love You. For the glory of God the Father, may You open all eyes to the Real Presence of Yourself in this great gift! May Mary, Mother of the Blessed Sacrament fill all hearts with Her love for our Eucharistic Lord. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk