

**Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time – August 19, 2018**

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

**First Reading: PRV 9:1-6 2**

Wisdom has built her house, she has set up her seven columns; she has dressed her meat, mixed her wine, yes, she has spread her table. She has sent out her maidens; she calls from the heights out over the city: "Let whoever is simple turn in here; To the one who lacks understanding, she says, Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed! Forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding."

**Responsorial Psalm: PS 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18**

**R. (9a) Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.**

I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall be ever in my mouth.  
Let my soul glory in the LORD;  
the lowly will hear me and be glad.

**R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.**

Glorify the LORD with me,  
let us together extol his name.

I sought the LORD, and he answered me  
and delivered me from all my fears.

**R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.**

Look to him that you may be radiant with joy,  
and your faces may not blush with shame.  
When the poor one called out, the LORD heard,  
and from all his distress he saved him.

**R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.**

**Second Reading: EPH 5:15-20**

Brothers and sisters:

Watch carefully how you live,  
not as foolish persons but as wise,  
making the most of the opportunity,  
because the days are evil.

Therefore, do not continue in ignorance,  
but try to understand what is the will of the Lord.  
And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies  
debauchery,

but be filled with the Spirit,  
addressing one another in psalms and hymns and  
spiritual songs,  
singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts,  
giving thanks always and for everything  
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the  
Father.

**Gospel: JN 6:51-58**

Jesus said to the crowds:

"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."

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying,  
"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Jesus said to them,

"Amen, amen, I say to you,  
unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and  
drink his blood,  
you do not have life within you.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood  
has eternal life,

and I will raise him on the last day.

For 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 living Father sent me  
and I have life because of the Father,

so also the one who feeds on me  
will have life because of me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven.  
Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died,  
whoever eats this bread will live forever."

## Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time – August 19, 2018

### Our Lady of Perpetual Help

#### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

#### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

#### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

This week's Gospel reading continues the passage which was introduced in last week's Gospel reading, in which we saw the Jews' incredulity directly linked to Jesus' statement about eating his flesh. It is interesting to note that their question isn't, "Can this be?" but rather "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Throughout the history of Christianity, the debate has more often taken place about the "how" of the Eucharist than about the reality of Jesus' promise. It is also instructive to note that Jesus does not answer their question as to how it can be, but rather he simply reiterates that it must be. Jesus knew and emphasized previously in this discourse that belief is the issue. Besides if he were to explain it to them they could not have comprehended it, for after all, they were mere men. How could they begin to comprehend the mysteries of God?

My ability to accept this mystery was enhanced by another equally astonishing mystery. One December as I was doing my daily Scripture reading and contemplating the Incarnation, when the Holy Spirit impressed on my heart and mind the awesomeness of Jesus' birth. The Spirit showed me that when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and she became pregnant with the child Jesus, that within the infinitesimally small seed implanted within Mary's womb there was contained all the fullness of God, a seemingly impossible but true reality. Simultaneously, He enabled me to grasp the concept that if God could be contained within the small, implanted seed within Mary, why is it so outlandish to think that he also could be fully present in the host? The same loving Father is the author of both miracles.

We also see Jesus mentioning in this passage the words "live," "life," "living," and "abide," ten times. Jesus emphasizes that life, real life, eternal life comes through him, through his body and blood. There is real substantial benefit in believing and partaking of him. Jesus truly meant the statements he made elsewhere in John 6 that the person who doesn't eat his flesh has "no life," and that the person who eats will "live because of me." The Jews, had no doubt as to what Jesus meant, even though they had no heart to believe him. We too, like these Jews, can ask in unbelief, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" or we can in faith believe and accept this sacrament which is a mystery that we cannot explain—because of the One who said it to us.

Irenaeus explains, "Our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and, in turn, the Eucharist establishes our opinion. For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and spirit. For the bread which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly... ."\*

Peter and the disciples' response to this seemingly scandalous message was, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:68) The disciples had been with Jesus long enough to observe his life, and to hear and meditate on his words. They knew he was Truth, and spoke the truth. They knew that if they walked away in disbelief, or in apprehension about accepting a mystery they could not understand that they would be walking away from some unbelievably strong promises and more importantly from a lifelong relationship with Jesus. Just listen to the promises of this week's recorded words of Jesus; "if any one eats of this bread he will live for ever,"—"has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day," — "abides in me. and I in him," — "will live because of me," and "he who eats this bread will live for ever." As we spend time with Jesus meditating on his words and listening to him we too will experience the growing conviction that Jesus is the Holy One of God and embrace the truth of his presence in the Eucharist.

\* *Adversus Haereses*, by St. Irenaeus of Lyons.

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**INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

First Reading

1. How would you feel to be known as “naive” in your faith?

Second Reading

2. What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?
3. What are the characteristics of wisdom according to the first and second reading?

Gospel Reading

4. What impresses you most from this passage?
5. What has been your journey of understanding the Eucharist?
6. Jesus’ intention is that the reality of his presence would enable us to abide in him and enable him to abide in us. How should this relationship of abiding be seen in our lives?

**INVITATION TO ACT**

*Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.*

**CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.*