



June 14, 2020

Solemnity of The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Why do we receive the Eucharist? To some, that may seem like a silly question. It's the body and blood of Jesus, so why wouldn't we receive it? However, I don't think the issue is quite so simple. Yes, it's great to have God physically present among us, but why would we want to eat and drink that presence? What exactly does consuming Jesus' body and blood do for us? That's a much tougher question to answer, and in this article by J. P. Nunez, wants to look at how the Bible answers it. Specifically, looks at what Jesus said about the importance of the Eucharist in our spiritual lives. I always refer to Holy Eucharist as Food for the Journey, Mr. Nunez gives us a short theological lesson the subject in today's the Gospel.

Many Catholics are familiar with the sixth chapter of John's Gospel. In it, Jesus gives a sermon that scholars call the Bread of Life Discourse, and this sermon (particularly verses 51-58) is often used in apologetics to show that the Eucharist really is Jesus' body and blood. He repeatedly tells his followers that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood, clearly confirming the Catholic belief that the Eucharist is not just a symbol. However, this sermon teaches us more than just the bare fact of Jesus' real presence; it also tells us a bit about the role the Eucharist is supposed to play in our spiritual lives. In particular, one thing Jesus says in it is packed to the brim with meaning: *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."* (John 6:51)

When we read Jesus' words about his flesh being given "for the life of the world," most of us understand him to be referring to his sacrificial death. On the cross, Jesus gave his life, his flesh, to redeem the entire world (1 John 2:1-2), and he gives us that very same flesh in the Eucharist. However, I would suggest that there is more here than meets the eye. Yes, Jesus is referring to his death, but his words have a second meaning as well, one that tells us a lot more about the role the Eucharist should play in our spiritual lives.

If we go back and read this verse in context, we can see that the Bread of Life Discourse was prompted by a short dialogue that Jesus had with his audience. In this dialogue, the people ask him what sign he would perform so they could know for sure that he came from God, and they cite the manna, the miraculous bread from heaven that sustained the Israelites as they traveled to the Promised Land after their exodus from Egypt (the story is recounted in Exodus 16:1-36), as an example of the kind of sign they're looking for (John 6:30-31). In response, Jesus tells them that the manna foreshadowed the "true bread from heaven" that God would later give his people (John 6:32), and then he begins his Bread of Life Discourse, where he explains that he himself (and ultimately his body and blood in the Eucharist) is the "bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:41, 51).

With that background, we can see that when Jesus says that his flesh is given "for the life of the world" in the Eucharist, he means that his flesh is the new manna, the "true bread from heaven" that is intended to sustain all of us on our journey to our heavenly homeland just as the manna in the Old Testament fed the Israelites on their journey to the Promised Land. However, this raises a question for us. How exactly does the Eucharist sustain us spiritually? What does it really mean to say that the Eucharist is our food for our journey to heaven?

So, the next time you go to Mass and receive Communion, remember that you're not just performing some archaic religious ritual that Jesus instituted a couple thousand years ago. No, when we receive the Eucharist, we nourish our souls with the new manna, the new bread from heaven that sustains our spiritual lives just like the manna in the Old Testament sustained the Israelites' physical lives. It strengthens us to live as faithful Christians in a hostile world, making sure that we remain connected to the source of all holiness and spiritual strength, Jesus Christ. Simply put, the Eucharist is food for our journey home, food that helps us to survive the hostile desert of this world and arrive safely at our heavenly homeland.

Article By **[JP Nunez](#)**- "The Eucharist our Food for the Journey"