

21st. Sunday in Ordinary Time August 22, 2021

I know that my Redeemer lives, and on the last day I shall rise again; in my body I shall look on God, my Savior. I myself shall see him; my own eyes shall gaze on him; in my body I shall look on God, my Savior. This is my hope I cherish in my heart. In my body I shall look on God, my Savior.

The above are lyrics to one of my favorite funeral hymns. "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." It is sung at the final commendation at the end of a funeral Mass. The priest at the final commendation may incense the coffin, both as a sign of honor to the body of the deceased which became the temple of the Holy Spirit at Baptism and as a sign of the faithful's prayers for the deceased rising to God. The usage of incense adds a sense of solemnity and mystery to the Mass.

This is what I believe to be true. One day, I will look on the face of God. These words have a profound meaning for me! Jesus declares that unless we eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, we can have no life in us. Those who eat his Flesh and drink his Blood will have eternal life and he will raise them up on the last day.

Remember, Jesus gives us of himself freely in the Eucharist. The reception of the Eucharist draws us into relationship with Jesus and makes that relationship stronger. Our life depends on this relationship! The only life worth living is a life lived in Jesus. Jesus tells us "It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless." In other words, you can be physically alive but spiritually dead.

What if you were listening to Jesus and heard "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink of his blood, you have no life in you." Would you turn away too as so many of his followers did? Yes, this is a hard teaching but it is the basis of our Catholic belief and faith in Christ Jesus. Remember, the Eucharist is the Sacrament in which we receive the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life. It is spiritual food for the soul. It is not merely a symbol but is Jesus' true Flesh and Blood.

For many the Eucharist is not the Body of Christ but "symbolic body of Christ". This belief is clearly seen in our liturgical actions at the Eucharist. Our external actions are reflective of our internal disposition. Do you receive the Body of Christ with the utmost reverence and respect that Jesus deserves? We should receive Jesus as if our very lives depend upon it. Too many of us take for granted the Body and Blood of Christ. I invite you as you make your way to the front of the church to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, to pray silently, asking Jesus for his Body and Blood, to transform you into his disciple, asking that by the reception of his Body and Blood, may you be brought into everlasting life with him. Remember, you become what you consume.

Reflection by Julie de Gouw, Pastoral Minister

