

## 080209 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday In OT The Eucharist Exposed

As you may remember, last weekend, Father Bill began a first teaching about the Eucharist; he spoke of the historical foundations and how the Eucharist was beginning to be foretold even in the early Old Testament. And then Father talked about respect for Jesus present on the altar... in the Eucharist and in the tabernacle. Father mentioned the gathering of food remnants as an early witness to treating God-given food – and the Eucharist – even the left-over particles left with reverence.

Scholars who comment on such matters have helped the Church see the Old Testament, God-given feedings as a for-telling of the Eucharist to come. Recall if you will, when the Jewish people were telling Jesus – “Oh, we know where that manna came from – Moses gave it to us.” And Jesus says, ‘you are wrong – my Father gave the bread – it was from heaven. And if you think THAT was a sign – wait until you see what my Father has in store for you. His next gift will be me -- and I will give you my flesh for the life of the world.’ And so we can see: the Old Testament gives us a view to what’s coming... and the New Testament fulfills what was veiled in the Old.

In 33 A. D. – Jesus Christ said these words, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven....and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh...” Some people didn’t get it then... and sadly... some people don’t understand now.

Just 75 years after Jesus, St. Ignatius of Antioch said, “The Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, the flesh which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, in his goodness raised up again.” Sounds pretty definitive just a few generations after Christ....

And then, a generation later, after Ignatius, St. Justin Martyr wrote these words, “Just as by God’s word, Jesus Christ our savior became flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food made Eucharist by the word of prayer... is both the flesh and the blood of that same Jesus.”

And just one more of these – we’ll jump to the mid 300’s A. D. St. Cyril of Jerusalem said that we ought not to regard the bread and wine as simply that... for they are the body and blood of Christ... Even though the senses suggest to you otherwise – let your faith make you firm...” in what you believe.

Gosh – don’t you get the notion that the early Church knew something that those who are Catholics now must also know to be true? As Father Bill talked about last week, most other Christian Churches – if they have any communion service – they see this as a community event – a symbolic holy meal. Jesus used words like eating his flesh – and people walked away from him because they thought it was a sickening notion. Jesus let them walk – he wasn’t using this as a metaphor.

So dear friends – what we are reminded of as to reverence and worship – I lift up to you as the most profound truth that Catholics believe... that is why we don’t offer our Eucharist to people of other faith. Our Eucharist is the holiest, most sacred thing we do. And woe to those who teach or practice otherwise in the Catholic Church.

Now – with this brief grounding – let me move onto something that seems to have been lost on so many Catholics – even ones who come to Mass regularly and who pray regularly.

What has been lost is understanding of the presence of Jesus in the Consecrated Host and which we reverence as the Blessed Sacrament. Now for those who don't know why we bow and genuflect when we pass the center of the Church... this tabernacle houses Jesus in two forms. One is if there are any left-over consecrated hosts; the other is one larger host that is used for what is called adoration. Truly Jesus Christ is as present in there as He was present in the womb of His Mother Mary... and as real as he was present at the Last Supper when he instituted the Mass.

The worldwide Catholic Church has what is called Eucharistic Adoration – the large consecrated host is reverently placed in this device called the Monstrance. Jesus – the God of the Universe humbles himself and he gives us the opportunity to come before him... it is our chance to worship Christ present among us... We have Eucharistic Adoration – that means Jesus exposed in this monstrance every Friday all day... and at certain other times or events in the year.

I have a book on my desk – the title is No Wonder They Call It the Real Presence – Lives Changed by Christ in Eucharistic Adoration. I recommend the book. However, let me share a real story from my recent attendance at a priest and deacon conference at Franciscan University in Steubenville, OH. Franciscan, I believe it is one of the most wonderful centers of Catholic education in America...

The opening night, among many other activities, we heard a short talk by a priest who had been ordained for 60 – six zero hours. That's three days. His name is Fr. Mark Rutherford. He told us this story. When Mark was 15 years of age – he was already living a life that many young people fall into.

By his admission, he was into sex, drugs and more. One night – Mark's grandfather had a dream. In the dream, Jesus appeared to the old man and said I want you to send three boys to a youth conference... one of the boys was to be this grandson Mark. The older man didn't know what a Steubenville youth conference was... but he started asking around and asking around. He finally was told that there was going to be one of these youth conferences in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

For the grandfather, the next challenge was to get the three young guys to go. None of them knew what this was about nor did they want to go, but partly by making a federal case out of it, the grandfather got Mark to go to this youth conference. And Saturday night during adoration of Jesus in the exposed Blessed Sacrament, the 15 year old Mark and his brother both broke down and started sobbing. Mark had no idea what all this was about... but as he tells it, his life changed starting that evening. And now, something like 10 years later – he is an ordained priest. And I met him and got his personal blessing just weeks ago in Ohio.

Jesus has always had the power to change lives. Maybe some will become priests or deacons or nuns. Maybe some will find the faith or a holy marriage. Maybe some will be healed... spiritually if not physically. What we need to do – is come before Jesus... the real Jesus Christ... found in Communion... and found in Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

Now on a slightly related note, this is the Year of the Priest in the worldwide Church. There are many things you can do to help the Church. You can come to Eucharistic Adoration and ask Jesus to help find us men for the priesthood.

You can do what I did last week – you can sit down and write a letter to a priest who has made a difference in your life. Tell him thanks for saying YES to God’s call. You can write a letter to the pastor – a letter to thank him for being here in a parish that many priests don’t want to come to. You can place an ad on the back of the bulletin and in the ad say “Frank and Susan Jones support and thank our Catholic Priests. And we pray for them.”

We wouldn’t have the Eucharist without priests... **priests are the gloves that God uses to touch us.** Sometimes Christ has to use broken vessels to share the graces He wants to give us. All priests need our prayers.

Thank you Jesus... Thank you Jesus for your precious Body and Blood in Communion and in the Blessed Sacrament. And thank you Jesus for our priests.

For 16-year-old Kate Mathis, who attended with a group from the Gaylord diocese, in Michigan, Saturday night's holy hour was a powerful experience. The eleventh grader from Lincoln, Michigan said, "*I didn't believe in God for three years. At adoration I let myself go and I saw His arms open for me and I opened mine to him.*"

## Reading 1

Ex 16:2-4, 12-15

The whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "Would that we had died at the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our fleshpots and ate our fill of bread! But you had to lead us into this desert to make the whole community die of famine!"

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will now rain down bread from heaven for you. Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion; thus will I test them, to see whether they follow my instructions or not.

"I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them: In the evening twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread, so that you may know that I, the LORD, am your God."

In the evening quail came up and covered the camp. In the morning a dew lay all about the camp, and when the dew evaporated, there on the surface of the desert were fine flakes like hoarfrost on the ground. On seeing it, the Israelites asked one another, "What is this?" for they did not know what it was.

But Moses told them, "This is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat."

## Responsorial Psalm

Ps 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54

**R. (24b) The Lord gave them bread from heaven.**

What we have heard and know, and what our fathers have declared to us, We will declare to the generation to come the glorious deeds of the LORD and his strength and the wonders that he wrought.

**R. The Lord gave them bread from heaven.**

He commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven; he rained manna upon them for food and gave them heavenly bread.

**R. The Lord gave them bread from heaven.**

Man ate the bread of angels, food he sent them in abundance. And he brought them to his holy land, to the mountains his right hand had won.

**R. The Lord gave them bread from heaven.**

## Reading II

Eph 4:17, 20-24

Brothers and sisters: I declare and testify in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; that is not how you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard of him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus, that you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth.

## Gospel

Jn 6:24-35

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered them and said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal."

So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent." So they said to him, "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: *He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*"

So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."