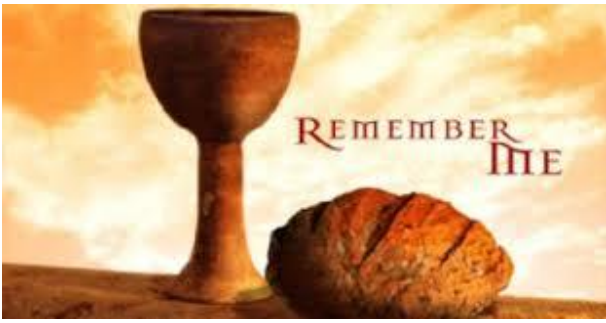


LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL



www.orlaghinthecity.ie

Corpus Christi

7th June 2026

John 6:51 Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

John 6:52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" ⁵³ So 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. ⁵⁴ Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; ⁵⁵ for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

This passage comes towards the end of John 6, a very significant and important chapter in this Gospel. As is well known, this Gospel faces two problems regarding the celebration of the Eucharist: taking part without realising who Jesus is and taking part without any effect on your daily life. The writer tackles the latter in chapter 13, by making the radical choice of omitting the account of the Lord's Supper at the Last Supper and replacing it with the washing of the feet. Clearly from that action, the Eucharist changes or should change the way we live. The writer tackles the first issue (taking part without a mature faith in Christ) in chapter 6. This chapter is made up of many sections but each section really climaxes with some point about the identity of Jesus. Peter's rhetorical question at the end, "Lord to whom shall we go?", points to the central teaching of chapter 6. In the middle of chapter 6, Jesus says "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (6:29).

KIND OF WRITING

The writer is reflecting on both the identity of Jesus and the meaning of the Eucharist, using the bible story of the manna in the desert. What we have here is one of the writer's poetic readings of the Jesus tradition, placed here on the lips of Jesus.

This writer often uses misunderstanding to trigger a deeper meaning. For instance, the Samaritan woman says "give me this water always" and it is clear she is still working on a material level. Likewise with Nicodemus when he wonders if a man can enter his mother's womb to be born a second time (!). Here the misunderstanding is "must we eat this man's flesh?" All these reactions are at the wrong level and something else is meant at another level. That something else is actually more shocking in some ways. Eat here means to be nourished by. Giving flesh and blood means, in this Gospel, the gift of the whole person of Jesus on the cross, i.e. the lifting up of Jesus. The challenge here is not first of all the literal or even sacramental eating of Jesus/his flesh, but rather being, in faith, nourished by his death on the cross. This was, as we know, the big stumbling block for Jews. It is not without difficulty even today for ourselves.

Thought for the day

Jesus himself practised open table fellowship, to express God's unconditional love and acceptance. Before he died, he spoke words over the bread and wine, words which disclosed the meaning of his death and resurrection. When St Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the Lord's Supper, he had to remind them that the sacrament is meant to be a communion among all who celebrate it and to have a practical affect in our lives. As Benedict XVI wrote: A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is essentially fragmented (God is Love)

KIERAN O'MAHONY OSA - www.tarsus.ie

REFLECTION

Today's feast is an opportunity for the church to reflect on the wonderful mystery of the Eucharist, the sacrament that nourishes our faith and unites us as the People of God. Each of the readings offers us opportunities to pray about its significance and they are reminders of the richness of this tradition in the church. They all remind us that this mystery cannot be separated from the way we live our lives. If we wish to show reverence for Christ in the Eucharist then we must show reverence for Christ in our community. To separate them is to risk idolatry.

SEAN GOAN - Let the Reader Understand

The gift of bread is Jesus himself, whose body was broken on the cross. It is this 'broken' Jesus that we meet in the Eucharist and who meets us in our own broken state. This broken Jesus challenges us to love the broken people we meet. The representation of Jesus as a homeless person [in the sculpture in the grounds of Christ Church cathedral in Dublin] challenges us to reflect on the paradox of the broken, marginalised Jesus, who gives us life. May we see him and love him in others.

God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength. (Vance Havner)

We have all been hurt or broken in some way; our brokenness binds us together as humans. Jesus challenges us to love the broken people. We start with ourselves.

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT - Go Deeper

Prayer Reflection

Lord, we remember with gratitude the day when we realized for the first time that following Jesus meant eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

Up to then it was a matter of believing abstract truths – that Jesus was truly God and truly man, that there are three persons in God and seven sacraments. That kind of faith was not a source of life for us.

Then one day we knew that we had to lay down our lives

– caring for a wayward child,

– working for reconciliation in the workplace and being attacked by both workers and employers;

– forgiving someone who had hurt us deeply.

At that moment we knew that Jesus on the cross was present within us, and the strange thing was that we felt an inner strength and freedom, and we were certain that no matter how low we fell he would raise us up.

Lord, self-centredness has become like a first principle of living today.

People will argue with one another that it is not even possible

for us to give our flesh to be eaten,

and yet there can be no life in the world without selfless giving, not in nature, not in families, not in any society.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus tells us that to have life we need more than physical nourishment. How have you been aware of deeper hungers? What has met that deeper longing in you?
2. Jesus tells us that it is not just something he gives us which will give us life, but himself in his life, death and resurrection. How has your faith in the person of Jesus fed you?
3. Jesus speaks about 'drawing life' from him. In day to day living what are the practices which support your faith and help you to draw life from Jesus?
4. The Eucharist is one of the ways in which we draw life from Jesus. Recall with gratitude how the Eucharist has been a source of nourishment and life for you.
5. Perhaps you can also think of human examples of people drawing life from one another. From whom have you drawn life? Who has been able to draw life from you?

JOHN BYRNE OSA - Intercom

"So if it is you that are the Body of Christ and its members, it's the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the Lord's table; what you received is the mystery that means you. It is to what you are that you reply Amen, and by so replying you express your assent. What you hear is **The Body of Christ**. and you answer **Amen**. So be a member of the Body of Christ in order to make that Amen come true.

St. Augustine Sermon 272

It is quite natural that the celebration the Mass has kept on changing through the centuries. After twenty centuries it may be necessary to remember some of the essential features of the Last Supper of the Lord, exactly as it was remembered and lived by the first generation of Christians.

As the basis of this supper there is something that will never be forgotten: his followers will not be left orphans. The death of Jesus will not be able to sever their communion with him. No one should feel the void of his absence. At the centre of every Christian community that celebrates the Eucharist is Christ, active and alive. Here lies the secret of its power.

The faith of his followers is nourished by him. It is not enough to be present at Mass. The disciples are invited to "eat". To nourish our attachment to Christ we need to gather together to listen to his word and to let them enter our hearts, and to come forward to "communicate" with him, identifying ourselves with the way he lived. We must not forget that to "communicate" with Jesus is to "communicate" with someone who has lived and died "given" totally for others. It is a contradiction to "communicate" with Jesus and to egotistically resist involving ourselves with anything except our own interests.

Properly celebrated, the Eucharist moulds us, keeps uniting us with Christ, nourishes us with his life, keeps us in close touch with the Gospels, invites us to live in a spirit of service, and keeps alive in us to hope of a final reunion with him.

JOSÉ A PAGOLA - Following in the Footsteps of Jesus