



## Bible Study – The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ Year A

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“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.” John 6:56-58 (NABRE)

### Reading I: Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14B-16A

**WE ARE WHAT YOU EAT.** This phrase refers to the fact that our bodies and minds take on the substance of what we consume. Nutritionists confirm that this idiom is true. Just as our houses are made of lumber, our bodies are made up of what we consume to maintain them. Our bodies replace three billion cells daily. These cells are replaced with what we consume. The same is true spiritually. We are bombarded with the demands of an often violent and materialistic world. If we consume more of what the world offers and less of what God has given us, we will reflect the violent and materialistic tendencies of this world. To renew ourselves spiritually, we must eat spiritual food.

At holy sacrifice of the Mass, we receive spiritual nourishment. Through the Sacrament of the



**Take this and eat it.**

Eucharist we are joined physically and spiritually to the earthly life of Jesus Christ. His body becomes one with our bodies in an intimate transformation. We are what we eat.

In the first reading from Deuteronomy, the second account of the giving of the law of God to the Jews, Moses gave Israel a pep talk before they entered and possess Canaan, the Promised Land. He retold the history of their infidelity and restoration. He reminded them of God’s fidelity and their disobedience (vv. 2-6). He showed them how the mercy and love of God had transformed them. They were to remain humble and dependent on Him, because He fed them when they were hungry (Ex: 16:15). The manna God provided was a bread of humility and testing (vv. 16-15). It was not ordinary bread. It foreshadowed the Body of Christ – the Eucharist. It was God’s bread. When they were thirsty He gave them water from the hard rocks, foreshadowing the water and blood from the side of Christ - Baptism. Since they ate what God provided, they were God’s people. They were what they ate. DISCUSSIONS QUESTIONS: What food do you eat that God has given to you? Why do you eat it?

### When Was the Eucharist Instituted?

1323 “At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet ‘in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.’” *Catechism of the Catholic Church.*  
<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/epub/index.cfm#>

### Reading II: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

**WE ARE WHAT WE EAT.** Much of what St. Paul writes about the Blessed Eucharist is in his Letter to the Corinthians. In Chapter 11, he corrects abuses that infiltrated the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Therefore, a full reading of Chapters 10 and 11 will assist in understanding the second reading.

Echoing the first reading, St. Paul warned the Corinthians against overconfidence (10: 1-13) and idolatry (vv. 14-22). Drawing on their institutional memory, he explained that all sacrifices, Christian (vv. 16-17), Jewish (v. 18), or pagan (v. 20), establish communion with the object of the sacrifice. So Christians should have no part in non-Christian sacrifices. Rather they must accept the *Breaking of the Bread* and the *drinking of the Blessing Cup* as full communion with Christ; exclusive and incompatible with any other communion (v. 21).

The *Drinking from the Cup of Blessing*, a truly Jewish expression, gives us communion with the Blood of Christ. The *Breaking of the Bread* gives us participation in the Body of Christ. St. Paul concludes that since we all partake in the body of Christ, we become one with Jesus Christ and with each other. We are what we eat. DISCUSSION QUESTION: What does it mean to be a member of the “Body of Christ”?

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### Gospel: John 6:51-58

**WE ARE WHAT WE EAT.** According to a recent study in the Journal of American Medicine, obesity is common and costly. This means that as Americans we eat a lot of what is not good for us. More than one-third of U.S. adults (34.9%) are obese. The estimated annual medical cost of obesity in the U.S. was \$147 billion in 2008 U.S. dollars; and the medical costs for people who are obese were \$1,429 higher than for those of normal weight. Non-Hispanic blacks have the highest age-adjusted rates of obesity (47.8%), followed by Hispanics (42.5%), non-Hispanic whites (32.6%), and non-Hispanic Asians (10.8%). The medical costs attributed to obesity are growing. Businesses are suffering due to obesity related job absenteeism (\$4.3 billion annually). We are what we eat and it is killing us.

If our spiritual life imitates our physical life, it is time to change and go on a diet of spiritual food. We need more of the Eucharist – the Body and Blood of Christ and the Word of God. He is food indeed.

This reading from John's Gospel is part of a discourse in which Jesus predicts that He will give His flesh and blood so that all who accept Him will have eternal life. The speech or discourse occurs after He fed the five thousand with five barley loaves. Crowds followed Him wanting more signs. Jesus seized this teaching moment to reveal the sacred mystery of His Body and Blood.

In John 6:35-51, Jesus is the Bread of Life in the sense that His revelation is the teaching of God (6:45). Therefore, one must believe in His teachings to gain eternal life (see also, [Sirach 24:21](#)). Then in John 6: 51-58, Jesus is nourishment, in the sense that one must feed on His flesh and blood to have eternal life.

According to the noted theologian Raymond E. Brown, the words in John 6:51 may be the Eucharistic formula used in the Johannine Communities. Taken together, these two parts of the sermon reveal that Jesus feeds us both through His revelation and His Eucharistic flesh and blood. Note that the Greek word for "eat" means to eat like an animal or gnaw. So we are to eagerly and frequently devour His Word, His flesh and drink His blood (v. 54). Note also that the consequence of eating eagerly, listening attentively and drinking fully of Jesus Christ is that we will have the same life that God the Father shares with Jesus the Christ (v. 56). We are what we eat. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What evidence do you have that the bread and wine is transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ?

### Pray About It.

#### Monday

Read and meditate on John 6:54.

#### Tuesday

Pray one decade of the rosary for world peace.

#### Wednesday

Read 2 Cor. 3:11-13. Perform three acts of humility.

#### Thursday

Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

#### Friday

Attend Mass and receive the Holy Eucharist.

#### What Is the Eucharistic Fast?

The Eucharistic Fast defines the rules for fasting before Communion. They were introduced by Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964, and can be found at Canon 919 of the Code of Canon Law:

Here are the rules: (1) A person who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain for at least **one hour before holy communion from any food and drink, except for only water and medicine.** (2) If a priest celebrates the Most Holy Eucharist two or three times on the same day he can eat something before the second or third celebration even if there is less than one hour between them. (3) A person who is elderly or infirm, as well as their care givers, can receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have eaten something within the hour preceding the mass.

**Resources:** *The Gospel According to John, Introduction to the New Testament*, Raymond E. Brown S.S. Doubleday New York, Ny. Pp 346-347; *1 Corinthians*, Mary Ann Getty; Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., pp. 1119-1121; *Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year A 2017*, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.ND. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 150-154; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. The Sunday Readings Cycle A, Kevin O' Sullivan, O.F.M Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 221-227; <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/>; <http://catholicism.about.com/od/thesacraments/f/What-Are-The-Rules-For-Fasting-Before-Communion.htm>; JMA February 26, 2014, Vol 311, No. 8 <http://www.healthychurcheshealthyfuture.org/learn-the-facts/economic-costs-of-obesity/>

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2017