

Homily of the 20th Sunday of Ordinary Time:

Today's readings highlight the fact that the Holy Eucharist, the perfect fulfillment of the symbol of the manna of the Old Testament, is the Food that gives us life forever. In last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus declared that the Bread he gives is his Flesh. This Sunday, Jesus **asserts, insists** that to eat this Bread is to have eternal life.

In today's first reading, taken from the Book of Proverbs, Lady Wisdom, representing God, offers wisdom and understanding in the form of a rich banquet to all those who are willing **to heed, to attend to, to give ear to her invitation**. The early Christians often identified Jesus as the Wisdom of God. They regarded the Eucharist as Wisdom's banquet, where they shared in the Divine Wisdom now Incarnate in Jesus.

The Responsorial Psalm (Ps 34), thanks God for His providential care, and His close association with His people, and invites all to "taste and see the goodness of the Lord."

In the second reading, Paul advises the Gentile Christians to show their gratitude to God for calling them, along with the Jews, to Christianity, and for giving them a share in the life of Jesus Christ. They will be able to receive this life by avoiding their former foolish ways, like getting drunk on wine. Instead, they are to be Spirit-filled with their talk edifying, always trying to discern and do the will of God.

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus **asserts, insists** that eating the Living Bread, which is Himself, allows us to participate in His life and to grow here and now in our eternal life with God. Jesus emphasizes the eternal-life dimensions of eating his Body and drinking his Blood - that those who have faith in Jesus and do so have already stepped into Heaven in this life, sharing in God's own life, and therefore in eternal life. Our participation in the Eucharist also concretizes and energizes our relationship with Christ, and with one another, with our brothers and sisters.

When we share in the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, Jesus himself comes to dwell within us. This communion with the Lord makes us one Body, brings us eternal life, and sends us forth to be the Body of Christ for the life of the world.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We need to allow our body to be broken and our blood to be shed for others as Jesus did. That is why, at the end of the Mass, we are sent out to announce the Gospel of the Lord by our humble services and examples of our lives, **radiating, diffusing** the love of Jesus, mercy, forgiveness and spirit of service all around us. It is not to say, "**Ohhh, this Mass has been too long, and now we are released to go to our own daily routine**". **It is to go and spread what we have experienced with Jesus, to share with our brothers and sisters the goodness of the Lord.**" Let us say with Jesus, "This is my body, given up for you" and "This is my blood, poured out for you, "and live out these words by living for others.

We need to keep the hunger and thirst for God alive in our hearts: Every human being is blessed at creation with an insatiable longing for God. We want God as our Father to hold us gently in His arms, keeping us safe throughout the dangers we face. But often we use substitutes as an escape from that need: fast living, fast-food, fast cars, needless luxuries, unrestricted sexual fulfillment. We demand the right to do whatever we want to do whenever we want. But let us remember the truth that unless we keep the hunger for God strong in our hearts, we will eventually realize the emptiness of our lives without Him.