

20240728. Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. This is my body...

Perhaps some of you unfamiliar with the first reading of the “Second Book of Kings” may have been surprised to learn that Jesus was not the only one who multiplied food. This biblical passage helps us see God's intentional and profound work throughout the centuries of salvation history. This biblical story shows Elisha's ability to allow God's power to flow through him.

Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians promotes God's command to live with unity and patience, supporting one another through the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us. Therefore, as disciples, we must live with humility and patience. This may be the most difficult command: to endure one another out of love—love of neighbor. Saint Paul believes this is possible because we are one in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today, we hear the beginning of chapter six of the Gospel of Saint John. We are in cycle B and usually hear that it corresponds to the Gospel of Saint Mark. However, starting this Sunday and for the next four weeks, we will review chapter six of the Gospel of John, which focuses on the Eucharist.

I invite you to pay special attention, not only because the Gospel of John is, for me and for many, the most beautiful and profound, but also because the theme of the Eucharist is and has been the center of concern of the Catholic Church in the United States and the world, especially in the most recent years.

Today, we hear the passage some of us know as the “multiplication of the loaves.” This passage is full of images and symbolism: A huge group of people are united, Easter time is approaching, and Jesus identifies the people's hunger. Like Elisha, Jesus provides them with what they need.

As with the bread that fell from the heavens in the desert and Elisha's food, the people had enough to eat and left over. What Jesus offers us as food is eternal life. Chapter six of the Gospel of Saint John is titled “The Eucharistic Discourse,” and Jesus declares himself “the Bread of Life.” When we receive the Eucharist, each of us receives Christ himself. He is our manna from Heaven, our bread of eternal life.

As many of you know, Indianapolis hosted the tenth Eucharistic Congress last week. To give us an idea of the dimension of this event, the ninth Eucharistic Congress was celebrated 87 years ago. According to surveys, only 3 out of ten Catholics believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. After much discernment, the church discerned that something had to be done to revive the flame of the Eucharist in Catholics around the world, and this congress was held.

I was fortunate to attend all five congress days with other Holy Trinity parishioners. We participated in many activities that touched our hearts. Out of pure curiosity, could anyone attend one or more conference days? For those who did not, I highly recommend searching for the videos on the EWTN channel on YouTube. You won't regret it. We do not have much time now, but I want to share three takeaways from the congress...

1.-We need to believe in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. We can't be part of this if we don't believe. From my own experience, I have heard many say, "I don't come to the Eucharist because I need to believe more before coming," or "I don't take the Eucharist because I am not worthy." Who is worthy? Remember these words... "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed." This is a key message heard at last week's conference: "Don't wait to change or be perfect to come to Jesus; come to Jesus and let Him be the one to change you."

2.-In Christ, we form one body. We must bring something to the Lord's table. Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians promotes God's command so we can live with unity and patience, supporting one another through the Holy Spirit who strengthens us. To be disciples, we must remain in unity. What can we bring? We can bring our joys, gifts, sadnesses, and problems. Whatever much or little we have, we offer it to the Lord.

Do you remember the young man who brought five pieces of bread and two fish? We are all invited to the Lord's table, and together, with the strength of the Spirit, we support each other. Whatever we bring, Jesus will take it and multiply it. As one body, we will all be satisfied by the power of the Holy Spirit at the Lord's table.

3.- The Eucharist is a gift for us to bring it to others. If we keep our blessings for ourselves, then we are selfish. The joy of the gospel is enjoyed even more when shared with others. The grace of God is for us so that we can pass it on later and multiply like the loaves in the passage from the gospel of Saint John. That is the Mission of the church, that is what Elisha did, that is what Jesus did, and the gift for us: the gift of the ability to be a blessing of God for others.

So, to conclude, three points:

1. We need to believe in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. We can't fully participate in this if we don't believe. Let us ask God for faith.

2.-In Christ, we form one body. We must live with unity and patience through the Holy Spirit who strengthens us. Let's ask God for hope.

3.-The Eucharist is a gift from God to us, so that we can share it with others. Let us ask God for charity.

In each Eucharistic prayer we hear from the celebrant, *In persona Christi*: "This is my body, which will be given for you. This is the cup of my blood, blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Jesus in the Eucharist is a gift for us and for many. Today's gospel invites us to bring our five loaves to form the body of Christ. Together with the power of the Holy Spirit, we can make God's blessings flow through us. We can start at home and in our community.

2 Kgs 4:42-44

Ps 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18

Eph 4:1-6

Jn 6:1-15