

2nd Sun Easter C / Christ Feeds Us

Introduction

In today's first reading we get a glimpse of the first generation of Christians... The early years were difficult with much persecution. We stand on the shoulders these early disciples of Jesus, 2000 years later. We still suffer persecution throughout the world.

In the second reading we see where we are headed... to our heavenly home, where God's family will gather around our loving God and Jesus, to rejoice in peace, joy and tranquility, 'where every tear will be wiped away, where there will be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain'. (Rev 21:4) How does the Gospel fit into this description of the beginning of our Church and the end of our journey?

I The Time In Between

We are now experiencing the time 'in between' while we are on our journey as disciples of Jesus.

Our journey has its good times and its difficult times.

Members of our Church, our brothers and sisters in Christ, are persecuted today by radicals and give their lives, as did Christ.

We ourselves proclaim a 'culture of life', in the words of St. John Paul II...

We consider life from womb to tomb to be sacred – a precious gift of our loving God. We ourselves are at times questioned and ridiculed and told to be silent, as were Jesus' disciples in the first reading... as was Jesus.

How do we survive? How do we remain faithful and loyal to Jesus our Shepherd, our Savior, our beautiful brother?

How do we continue with a peaceful and joyful heart in the midst of the worries and fears, and the challenges of our world today?

II The Gospel

Today's Gospel, in my opinion, gives us the answer.

The scene: After his unexpected Resurrection which so filled his disciples with joyful relief following his ghastly death, we have several resurrection stories in which the resurrected Jesus is feeding his disciples.

He feeds them bread and fish...

Bread reminds us of John 6 where Jesus tells his disciples:

I myself am the living bread come down from heaven... the bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. (v 51)

Fish is the early Church's symbol for Christ... the Greek 'ikthos' letters stand for 'Jesus Christ Son of God'.

So Jesus feeds his disciples with himself, to strengthen them and keep them faithful on their journey of faith.

Where do we encounter Jesus feeding us today, we who are on our journey as disciples of Jesus, 2000 years later?

'At Mass'.

How do we remain faithful and loyal to Jesus, 2000 years later?

Jesus continues to feed us 'at Mass'.

We are here today because we know deep down that we need Jesus' help if we are to remain faithful to him 2000 years later, and we need the witness of those around us who faithfully attend 'Mass'.

III Story... Keep The Log Burning

A member of a certain church, who previously had been attending services regularly, suddenly stopped coming to Church.

The pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire.

Guessing the reason for his pastor's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a comfortable chair near the fireplace and waited. The pastor made himself at home but said nothing. In silence he contemplated the dance of the flames around the burning logs.

After some minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone.

Then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet contemplation.

As the one lone ember's flame flickered and diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and lifeless.

The pastor glanced at his watch and realized it was time to leave. He stood up, picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the pastor reached the door to leave, his host said with a tear running down his cheek, "Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the "fiery sermon". I shall be back in church next Sunday.

Regular attendance at Sunday Mass is at the heart of being a Catholic.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity.

Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (# 2128)

Catholics hear the Word of God proclaimed, and remember together the love of Christ as seen in his Passion and Death – his Body broken, His blood shed for our salvation.

Catholics offer ourselves together with Jesus to our loving Father. We are invited to share communion... the very Body and Blood of Christ, food and nourishment for our journey with the Lord.

This is the blazing fire of Christ's love which keeps our lives aflame with love and devotion towards God and our brother Jesus.

(See **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, Part II, *Sacraments*, # 1322 – 1419.)

When we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus at Mass, St. Thomas Aquinas lists four effects.

In receiving Christ the faithful are:

1. *Healed from our sin – here read bondage to self.*
2. *Joined with Christ in His self-offering – here emphasize our offering our lives to our loving Father thru Christ, with Christ, and in Christ.*
3. *Inebriated with love – here focus on our loving response to Jesus' love for us...our devotion.*
4. *Nourished – here understand spiritual nourishment to lead the kind of lives Christ wants us to lead.*

We need Christ's help to live the Christ-life.

We need Christ's help to do our Father's will and help His kingdom to come...

and not just do our own will and work for our own kingdom to come.

We Catholics believe that in this Eucharist God continues to love us, to heal us, to strengthen us, to nourish us.

At the Last Supper Jesus fed his disciples with his own Body and Blood. After the Resurrection Jesus continued to feed his disciples... today's Gospel. Now Jesus feeds us with this Bread which is his Body broken for us and the Cup of Wine which is his Blood shed for us.

That's the Good News about which the Eucharist assures us.

Conclusion...

For us disciples of Jesus our life is about being other Christ's –
We are nourished and strengthened by Jesus not just for ourselves... life is not just about me...

We are nourished and strengthened so that we can follow in Christ's footsteps as we journey through our lives.

The Eucharist is **spiritual nourishment, spiritual food, spiritual strength** to live as other Christs in our world.

We join St. Francis of Assisi as we pray:

Lord make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred let me bring your love
Where there is injury, pardon
Where there is doubt, true faith in you.
Where there is despair, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, let me bring light
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.
For it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And in dying we are born to eternal life.

What a challenge... What a calling. We are disciples of Jesus.