

Jesus Christ is made present in the Flesh--How can we be flesh to others

c-b-20th Sunday of Ordinary Time, August 15th, 2021

In this homily. Talk about "The bread that I give for the life of the world is my flesh." What that means, and how people were turned off.

Have you ever heard of skin hunger? Each one of us has skin hunger.

It is that innate need to be touched by others.

Studies have been done in hospitals. If babies are not touched by other human beings, they will die.

A few years ago I suggested that we need three hugs a day, just for maintenance.

From time to time a parishioner will come up to me and give me a hug.

Their comment will be, "Just for maintenance."

I think we also have a spiritual skin hunger.

We have an innate desire to touch God.

I remember reading about a conversation a mother was having with her daughter.

The mother was explaining that God is a spirit and that he is everywhere.

But the little girl cried out, "But I want him to have a skin on."

Which was her way of saying that she wanted to be able to reach out and touch God.

There is no doubt in my mind that we were created with an innate spiritual hunger
to reach out and touch God.

I have yet to meet someone who isn't in some way drawn to God.

Often they don't know it,

Sometimes they will not admit it.

But if they really examined what was happening to them,

they would admit that there was something beyond themselves that was drawing them.

There is a poem entitled "The Hound of Heaven,"

in which an individual describes the relentless pull in which God pursues him,

until he surrendered himself to the infinite love of God,

and no longer felt the pull, but rather felt the great embrace of God's love.

It doesn't take long to find the numerous places people are going to have this hunger fulfilled.

Eastern religions, the latest relaxation fad,

throwing themselves into a hobby, music or their careers.

Some will experiment with alternative lifestyles, or alternative societies.

Nor does it take long to see someone who is starving, because their spiritual hunger is so great.

They are the ones who have that empty faraway look in their eyes.

When I see these people I want to cry out, "Jesus Christ is the one whom you are looking for."

Or "Jesus Christ can feed you."

And I am not just saying this because I'm a priest and it is Sunday.

When I was working in the Cypress Hills, I knew,

I just knew that I was not supposed to be working for the Provincial government
for the next 35 years.

Admittedly I didn't know what it was that was drawing me.

And I did travel the world over looking for what could feed my hunger,
only to discover the hunger that was driving me
was not something that I would find in any particular place,
rather there was a spring of eternal life springing up within me,
I needed only to tap into it.

This is where today's gospel comes in. Jesus refers to his flesh five times in the gospel.

The bread that I give is my flesh for the life of the world.
Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.
My flesh is real food and my blood real drink.
Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I abide in them.

Jesus knew how we were created.

He knew that we had this innate desire to be united with our God.
He himself would have felt the pull of the Father every moment of his existence.
And in the end he knew that we would need a God that we could see and touch.
So that we could get our maintenance hugs.
So he left us his body.

John's gospel is an interesting gospel.

It was written about 30 years after the other three gospels.
By then the people had had time to reflect on Jesus' birth, his life, his death and his resurrection.
They would have been gathering on the Lord's Day, the eighth day,
the day of the resurrection, to celebrate the Eucharist.
The doctrine, and the practice, of the Eucharist was so well established,
that the evangelist did not deem it necessary to include the institution of the Eucharist.
If you read John's gospel Jesus never says, "This is my body, this is my blood."
We get these words from the other three gospels and the letters of Paul.
What John wanted to really focus on was the sacrificial aspect of Jesus' death on the cross.
So John has Jesus dying at the same time that all the Passover lambs were being slaughtered
all over Israel.

Hence the term we hear every Sunday,
"This is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,
happy are those who are called to this supper."

But John also wanted to give his readers an understanding of the Eucharist.

So he does this in connection to the multiplication of the loaves.
We have been reading this explanation for the past three Sunday's
and will continue to read for the next two Sunday's.
John wanted his readers to know that Jesus wasn't just a God,
who would be willing to sacrifice his life for us, and then return to the Father.
He wanted his readers to know that Jesus was also a God,
who would be willing to leave part of himself behind,
so that we could always see and touch him.
So that we could eat his body and never be hungry,
or drink his blood and never be thirsty.

It's a message that is as old as the Christian faith.

A simple message.
Perhaps that's why people are not willing to accept it. It's too simple.
They want something more complicated.
Well I'm here to tell you that the way to eternal life is easy.
Jesus himself told us the way.
Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life
and I will raise them up on the last day,
for my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.
But there is one catch. We have to Believe it.
And not with a lukewarm faith that responds amen when the Eucharist minister says,
"The Body of Christ."
But we should be responding, AMEN!
I was explaining to this year's 1st Communion class how to receive the Blood of Christ,
and that they were to respond AMEN not amen.
One little girl, for the next few Sundays came up, and when I presented the Body of Christ to her
she said AMEN.
I felt like holding her up and saying,
Whoever does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter into it.

But it does not end with receiving the Body of Christ and responding AMEN.
A faith that is nourished by the Body of Christ,
as much as it desires union with the Father,
desires to be shared.
And this is where many of us are not ready to go.
We are content with touching God in the Eucharist,
but we are not ready to become flesh, so that others could touch God.

The first reading is from the Book of Proverbs,
a compilation of the Wisdom that the Jewish people had gleaned
about their relationship with their God.
In that Book, Wisdom is seen as the instruction of God's law.
Where adherence to the wisdom of God leads to a full and satisfying life.
In the passage we read, the wisdom of God sends out servants,
and instructs them to call from the highest places in town.
"You, that are simple turn here."
If we truly want to become the Body of Christ,
if we truly want to become flesh,
through which others can touch God, we need to tell others,
"Come eat my bread, and drink the wine that I have mixed, and you will have life within you."

We receive the Body of Christ, to become more like Christ.
Let us become his body in the world,
let us reach out with his Word, with his Love, with his Body,
and become the food that satisfies the hunger in our world.

