

## 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B – 08/20/2009 – Deacon David Ritter

The gift from God, the gift of himself, is the joy of every Christian, we celebrate it always and everywhere we can - but it is also throughout history - and especially in our times a stumbling block to faith. As we have seen in the past few weeks as especially in today's Gospel: even as Jesus related this awesome gift to the people - many were unsure, afraid, uncomprehending. They couldn't, wouldn't accept that their God would come to them in such a way and continue with such a gift, which seemed gruesome. That God himself came among us to free us from our slavery to sin makes many people uneasy - they want their God to be great but aloof, all powerful but distant. It makes many nervous that God takes such an intimate concern in us. And as such, they can not accept the gift of the Eucharist, either outright or in their understanding of it. But that is their vision of God - it is not God.

He did come to us - he did walk among us - and he did offer himself for our salvation. And He gave us himself, continuously in the Eucharist: the food of salvation, our spiritual strength, our medicine of eternal life. Every Mass we participate in the act of this gift. We take and eat the Lord; body, blood, soul and divinity. We accept the Lord's gift and we give thanks for it. But it is much more than divine food!

The Church doesn't call it receiving food! We come forward and receive communion, - we come and receive the Lord Himself. We receive a person! We receive a relationship! I come forward and lovingly receive someone who walked this planet 2,000 years ago - I receive my God whom I love. He becomes part of me and I become part of Him. We are in communication with each other in a way that is unique in all my relationships - but not singular in the world. Because each and every one of us who receives the Lord in the Eucharist also shares in this Communion; we are in Him and He is within us. And, in a very real way we become one with each other!

St Paul in his 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Corinthians sums this idea up in a short but very compact sentence. "*Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*" By this process of communion, of receiving God in the person of Christ; Jesus, ever and again builds the Eucharistic fellowship - the Church. We become one with God, through Christ, and one with each other.

As Jesus said in today's Gospel He "*remains in me I in Him*". And since He remains in me and remains in you we each are in Communion, in fellowship, in a loving relationship with each other. We are responsible to each other and for each other. And this is another idea that makes many uneasy - because sadly not only do many people like their God distant - but unfortunately they like everyone else distant as well.

But God wills that we strive to build up the Body of Christ by witnessing His Love with each other. How could it be otherwise? It is the greatest of His commandments - It is foundational to our existence when we receive Christ, of being a believer. Christ tells us in today's Gospel "*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.*" Everything we have is from God, and God is Love, and therefore we are too; or should be but for our sinful nature. By receiving our Lord in form of the Eucharist we are nourished with God and we reinforced with Love and we are energized to radiate this to everyone we encounter. If we receive Him and don't then we are wasting His gifts to us and we are wasting our opportunity to thank Him for them.

Every day I start with the intention of thanking Him by living the Love of the Eucharist. Most days I do fairly well - not perfect but well; and every so often I completely fail. But I pick myself up and I try and follow what St Paul tells the Ephesians to "*be filled with the Spirit*" and live a life worthy of the gift that God gave us. How about you?