

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (8/23/09)

Today's gospel finishes Jesus' teaching on the bread of life in chapter 6 of John's gospel. The result is that some of his disciples decide they cannot accept his teaching and leave. One of the proofs that Jesus was not just speaking metaphorically or figuratively when he said that "...unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you," is that he didn't correct the disciples who were leaving. If he were an honest teacher, and he was and is, he had an ethical responsibility to correct them and would have said to them, "Hey guys, don't leave, you misunderstand. I was just speaking metaphorically." But Jesus did not correct them. He was serious about his teaching.

Even though Peter and the other faithful disciples did not understand either, they did not leave Jesus. They accepted on faith what he taught. It was only after the death and resurrection that they could begin to understand. We too can understand today because we have been gifted with our faith from our post-resurrection faith from our ancestors. But we can not understand completely. How could the bread and wine become the flesh and blood of Jesus? It's beyond our science, our comprehension. Yet we believe because of the miracle of God's love for us in the Eucharist. God never stops caring for us. We have proof every day in the celebration of the Eucharist. May our lives be a deeper growing into the mystery of Christ's presence in the world.

Having been nourished at the table of the Lord, may we be transformed into Eucharist for each other.

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22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (8/30/09)

In making moral decisions, Thomas Aquinas teaches us that there are 3 elements to a decision; the action itself (whether physical or mental), the intention of the doer, and the circumstances. The action itself is the most important; if it is morally wrong, nothing else can make it good (e.g. the killing of human life in abortion or embryonic stem cell research). On the other hand, a morally good action can be diminished or even become wrong because of a bad intention or circumstances (e.g. I give to charity publicly so others will think good of me).

Our readings today focus on the necessity of linking the internal actions of our heart and mind with our external observance of the commandments. Jesus warns the Pharisees that all evil comes from within. We may be tempted from outside but it is internally that we give rise to evil by cooperating with evil temptations. We each decide in our heart how we will serve God. Love of God and neighbor summarizes all the law and prophets. It begins in the mind and heart and is completed in external actions. If we have good minds and hearts we will naturally produce good fruit in our actions. On the other hand, if our mind and heart are not pure, we will produce rotten fruit. There is a natural correlation between the internal and the external. We need to remember that although we can fool one another, we can't fool God. God knows our hearts.

Let us purify our hearts and minds through prayer and almsgiving, and then grow in holiness by deeds of fruitfulness that help and inspire each other. May God bless us in our growth!