

JUNE 26, 2011

BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST SUNDAY

JOHN 6:51-58

Many years ago, a woman who was preparing to be received into the Church through the RCIA process came to me and wanted to know specifically about “eating the flesh of Jesus.” Her question: are we Catholics cannibals? If we were, she just couldn’t go on. It was Lent—a time when the Evil Spirits try to deflect the Candidates from their journey of faith and her pause about continuing on to Easter was clearly the work of these spirits. After a conversation on the “Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity” of the *Risen* Christ—the essence of the Sacrament of the Eucharist—the woman was ready to continue forward *in faith*.

There is no question that “eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus” requires our faith. As time goes on in our lives—at least in my life—I find that I have allowed my faith to wane by not thinking too often about the awesomeness of this reality. But is it possible that the less we Catholics ponder the reality of “eating the flesh of Jesus,” the more likely we will paradoxically allow a form of “cannibalism” to take over our lives? Strictly speaking “cannibalism” is the act of eating one’s own species. But phrases that have crept into ordinary usage reveal a broader application: “they’ll eat him alive” and “go after him until you taste blood” are two examples. And then, there are “cannibalistic activities” that have become prevalent in our society such as bullying and rape. These activities “eat away” at the victim—taking away their life force.

But since none of us engage in these overt “cannibalistic activities”, perhaps we should reflect more metaphorically.

‡ Do I “eat away” at someone until I get my way?—my spouse, my co-worker, a community member?

‡ Do I take an argument all the way to “drawing blood”?

‡ Do I exact the proverbial “pound of flesh” as payment for emotional debts or monetary ones?

It is much easier to keep our ponderings on the Body and Blood of Christ in the “spiritual” realm. However, the dualism that ensues fractures us. When we interface how we carry out our everyday activities with our belief about the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus, the authenticity begins to shape our conversion. I no longer live one life in which my inflated ego attempts to cannibalize those who fall to my “sword”. My deep though fragile belief in the “Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus” which I receive in Communion permeates my whole life. My ego deflates and I only want the life-force that lived in Jesus to live also in me. I want his gentle touch to emanate from me. I want his soothing words to come from my mouth as well.

As St. Augustine said: “I want to become what I eat.”

For reflection or sharing:

▲ **What evidence do you have that you are “becoming” the Lord whom you eat?**

--Reflection and question by Sr. Diane Langford, CDP, written in 2011