

Sunday Message

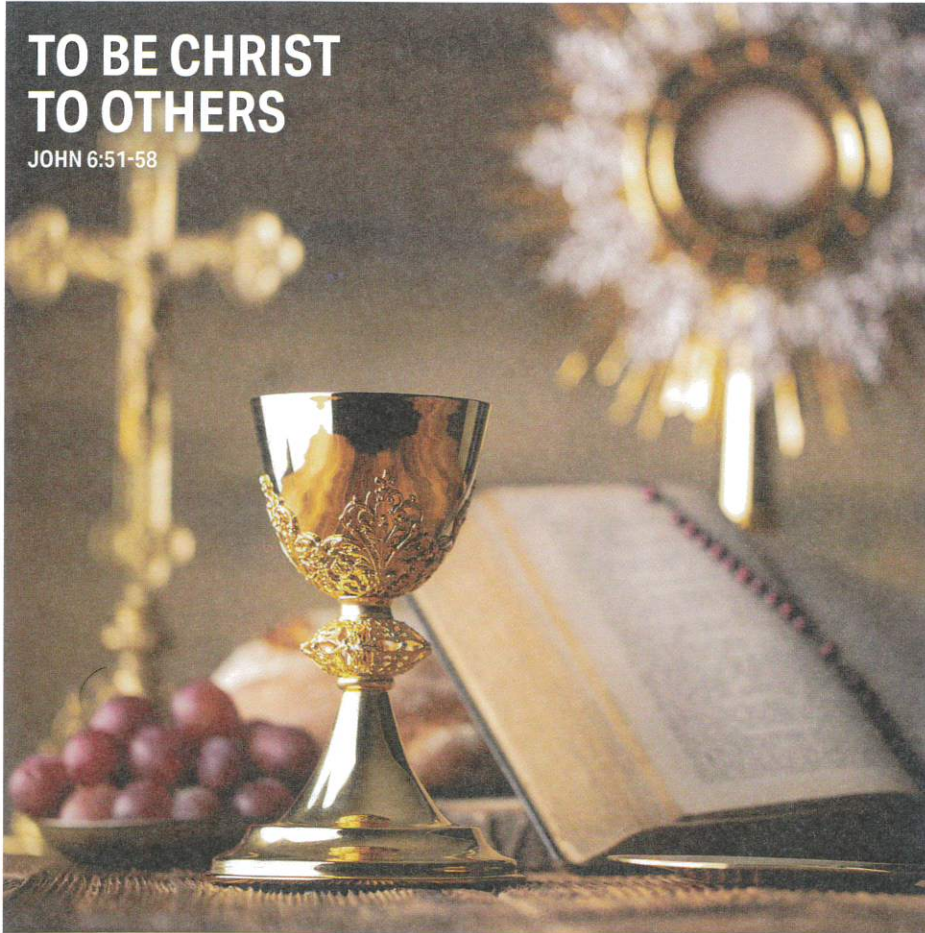
TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year B • 18 August 2024 • Psalter Week 4

TO BE CHRIST TO OTHERS

JOHN 6:51-58



Today's Gospel begins with the final verse from last Sunday's Gospel. Jesus has identified his own flesh with "the living bread that came down from heaven" and says that only those who eat this bread will live forever.

It is a dramatic and shocking statement. Today we hear the crowd's response to it. As long as Jesus described himself as "bread of life," it was possible for the crowd to hear his teaching. Now that he starts to talk of himself as "flesh" that people must eat, the crowd reacts with shock and horror.

Jesus' response is to offer a solemn teaching beginning with "I tell you solemnly," which always signals an important statement to follow. Jesus' language becomes even more explicit. Not only does he talk of someone eating his flesh but now he adds the idea of someone drinking his blood. Both are required for eternal life. The language is difficult but it is obvious to the Christian reader that Jesus is talking about the Eucharist. It is by taking part in the Eucharist that Jesus' followers will receive his gift of life.

Notice that now Jesus no longer talks about himself in the third person, using the title "Son of Man." Instead, he speaks directly in the first person, using the pronoun "I." Jesus will raise on the last day all those who eat his flesh and drink his blood.

In the final verse, Jesus concludes his teaching on the bread of life. His emphatic message - his promise - is that whoever eats the bread from heaven that he offers will have eternal life. ■

SAY

"Lord, I thank you for the privilege of being able to receive you in Holy Communion."

REFLECT

Jesus ends his sermon on the Bread of Life with a mighty promise: "Whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

When we receive Holy Communion, we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus, our Saviour. "Body and Blood" is but an expression that means the person. But the "body" we receive is a body broken for us on the cross; the "blood" we receive is the blood, the life of Christ, poured out for us.

When we receive the Body and Blood of Christ we are saying that we want to be the body of Christ in the world today. Like Jesus, we want to give ourselves for others wherever a brother or a sister of Christ is in need. What's the use of recognising Christ in the bread and wine if we cannot recognise him in those around us?

When the priest raises the host and recalls the words of Jesus, "This is my body which will be given up for you," Jesus is also saying to his Father, "In these people gathered here today is my other body ready to give themselves for others."

That is our challenge and our privilege. ■

PRAY

We can take the gift of the Eucharist for granted. Thank God for your parish community and for the opportunity you have to celebrate the Eucharist together.

Pray to be able to see the face of Christ in all those you meet this week and every week.

LEARN

The Eucharist is our food for eternal life.

In the Eucharist, the bread and wine are really changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

True wisdom is knowing that Jesus is the Bread of Life, the one who shows us the way to salvation.

DO

Think about your reasons for going to Mass. Why do you go, really? Ask the Lord to deepen your faith.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Turn your eyes, O God, our shield;
and look on the face of your anointed one;
one day within your courts
is better than a thousand elsewhere.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who have prepared for those who love
you
good things which no eye can see,
fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of your
love,
so that, loving you in all things and above all
things,
we may attain your promises,
which surpass every human desire.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Proverbs 9:1-6

A reading from the book of Proverbs.

Wisdom has built herself a house,
she has erected her seven pillars,
she has slaughtered her beasts, prepared her
wine,
she has laid her table.
She has despatched her maidservants
and proclaimed from the city's heights:
"Who is ignorant? Let him step this way."
To the fool she says,
"Come and eat my bread,
drink the wine I have prepared!
Leave your folly and you will live,
walk in the ways of perception."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 33 (34):2-3, 10-15

Response:

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

1. I will bless the Lord at all times,
his praise always on my lips;
in the Lord my soul shall make its boast.
The humble shall hear and be glad. (R.)

2. Revere the Lord, you his saints.
They lack nothing, those who revere him.
Strong lions suffer want and go hungry
but those who seek the Lord lack no
blessing. (R.)
3. Come, children, and hear me
that I may teach you the fear of the Lord.
Who is he who longs for life
and many days, to enjoy his prosperity? (R.)
4. Then keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking deceit.
Turn aside from evil and do good;
seek and strive after peace. (R.)

SECOND READING

Ephesians 5:15-20

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Ephesians.
Be very careful about the sort of lives you lead,
like intelligent and not like senseless people.
This may be a wicked age, but your lives
should redeem it. And do not be thoughtless
but recognise what is the will of the Lord. Do
not drug yourselves with wine, this is simply
dissipation; be filled with the Spirit. Sing the
words and tunes of the psalms and hymns
when you are together, and go on singing and
chanting to the Lord in your hearts, so that
always and everywhere you are giving thanks to
God who is our Father in the name of our Lord
Jesus Christ.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! The Word was made flesh
and lived among us:
to all who did accept him he gave power to
become children of God. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 6:51-58

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.
Jesus said to the crowd:
"I am the living bread which has come down
from heaven.
Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever;
and the bread that I shall give is my flesh,
for the life of the world."
Then the Jews started arguing with one another:
"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they
said.
Jesus replied: "I tell you most solemnly,
if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and
drink his blood,
you will not have life in you.
Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my
blood
has eternal life,
and I shall raise him up on the last day.
For my flesh is real food
and my blood is real drink.
He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood
lives in me
and I live in him.
As I, who am sent by the living Father,
myself draw life from the Father,
so whoever eats me will draw life from me.
This is the bread come down from heaven;
not like the bread our ancestors ate:
they are dead,
but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever."
The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive our oblation, O Lord,
by which is brought about a glorious exchange,
that, by offering what you have given,
we may merit to receive your very self.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

With the Lord there is mercy;
in him is plentiful redemption.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Made partakers of Christ through these
Sacraments,
we humbly implore your mercy, Lord,
that, conformed to his image on earth,
we may merit also to be his coheirs in heaven.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

Father in heaven, you have made us for yourself;
our hearts are restless until they rest in you.
Fulfil this longing through Jesus, the bread of
life, so that we may witness to him who alone
satisfies the hunger of the human family. By
the power of your Spirit lead us to the heavenly
table where we may feast on the vision of your
glory for ever and ever. Amen.