

13 Sunday after Pentecost. Proper 13 Year B. August 17-18, 2024
Saint Paul and Saint Luke

Scripture:

Proverbs 9:1-6

Psalm 34: 9 - 14

Ephesians 5:15-20

John 6: 51-69

Abide in Me

In this passage of the Gospel of John, Jesus invites us to eat of his flesh and drink of his blood in order to have eternal life.

It's little wonder that some of his followers left him after this graphic analogy to what may seem like cannibalism and acting like a vampire.

What does Jesus mean? We remember that earlier in John's Gospel, Jesus is described as the word (of God) made flesh.

By ingesting God's word as brought to life through his only begotten son, Jesus, we become more like Christ and draw closer to God, the source of life eternal.

When we consume the sacraments, which are outward and visible signs of God's grace, serving as the body and blood of Christ - Our sins are forgiven and we begin acting more like Christ.

Today's lesson builds on the previous lessons of Jesus which began with his feeding of the five thousand, using only a few fish and pieces of bread - and there were leftovers!

Jesus explained that the food he offers is different from the manna sent by God in heaven to feed the starving Israelites. Ultimately they died - as we all will.

By partaking in the holy blood and bread of Jesus - be eating the living bread offered to us through Jesus - we can have life eternal. Our sacrament of Holy Eucharist is based on these teachings of Jesus' - providing us the gift of life.

It's important to note that Jesus saves our lives by giving us new life in Christ. The language of flesh and blood emphasized the embodiment - or incarnational nature of our faith.

We believe that flesh and the spirit belong together. When we are united with Christ - when he abides in us and we abide in him - that's when eternal life becomes possible. We are joined in his suffering - death on the cross - and in the joy of his resurrection.

Keeping flesh together with the spirit requires us to live deeply, appreciating our interdependence and interconnectedness with our Creator God.

The Bread of Life Discourse is Jesus' way of teaching us to live incarnationally - and intentionally - praying daily and thanking God for our daily existence.

A faithful life is marked by a spiritual practice of incarnational abiding.

We abide in Christ by truly abiding in and loving ourselves - so we can truly love and serve others. As Jesus says in John 6:56, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them."

This sentence summarizes the transformation that occurs within us when we consume the sacramental bread and blood of Christ during the Eucharist. Reciting the Eucharistic prayer and the actions of a priest, consecrate these elements into representations of Jesus' body and blood. Consecration is one of the most holy duties of a priest.

Transformation occurs when through our own faith and belief in Jesus, we are changed and our community of faith is changed through the regular practice of Eucharist.

Faithful people are not seeking immortality but rather a way of living that deprives fear of dying from having the upper hand. When we truly abide in Christ and he abides in us, we give up the notion that we are in sole control of our lives.

When we accept the love of God that is pure grace, love flows from us and we love others without judgment.

We need to remember that simply consuming the holy sacrament of Jesus' body and blood is not enough for salvation. We need to believe that Jesus came to save us from our sins and to redeem the world.

The verb BELIEVE appears 80 times in John's Gospel while the word FAITH does not. When it appears elsewhere in the Gospels, FAITH is presented as a VERB, Faith is how we act and behave toward others.

Two sacred believers were honored this week - Jonathan Myrick Daniels who as a young seminarian, responded to Dr. MLK's call to integrate churches in the south. He lost his life defending a young black Rudy Sales. He took the bullet intended for Ruby and died a martyr at age 26. He joined the Episocapl church after a conversion experience at an Episcopal Church in Boston where he heard the words of Mary's Magnificat and put his faith in action by going to Selma to protest white supremacy.

Thursday we honored the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ who said yes when she was asked by an angel of God to bear God's son. She was a woman of great courage and deep faith. Even though she was not yet married to Joseph, she accepted God's will for her life.

These two examples of sacrificial love of God may seem beyond your reach. Yet, when you pray to God "thy will be done" and mean it, you turn your life over to our Divine Creator. Together with God, we can achieve things that

we could never imagine. Ordinary people motivated by faith in God and Jesus Christ, like Jonathan Daniels, can do extraordinary things.

When we adopt an apostolic connection to Christ and commit to walking with him and other believers, we become the people of God.

As theologian Alexander Schemaman wrote in 1963. "A Christian is one who... finds Christ everywhere, and rejoices in Him. And this joy transforms all human plans and programs, decisions and moves and motivates us to seek the return of the world to God, the source of life eternal - what was, what is and what will be.

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Amen.