

My dear people of God, in today's Gospel Jesus has reached the climax of his teaching on the bread of life by saying **"I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world (Jn.6:51)."** When Jesus said these words, many of his disciples left him, because his words seemed like a terrible thing to do. Of course, they were not to be taken literally. Remember at the Last Supper, Jesus took the bread, and he blessed it, broke it, and he gave it to his disciples. He said to them, "This is my body." He didn't mean body in the sense that we do. For the Hebrew people, if someone said, "This is my body," they meant "This is myself." he said, "Take it and eat. This is my body." then he took the chalice. Of course, the people in the setting of the Last Supper were all Jews, and they knew what these symbols meant.

Let's put today's Gospel into its proper perspective of John chapter six. There's an integrated theme closely linking the three parts of this chapter. First, the chapter begins with **Jesus feeding the crowd** of 5,000 by multiplying five small loaves of bread and fish (Jn.6:11-13). Again, **Jesus walking on the sea (Jn.6: 19)**. Note that feeding 5,000 with five loaves cannot be explained by the law of nature and neither can anybody explain why he was able to walk on the lake without his body from sinking. Here Jesus is telling us that he has power over the law of nature: **"Jesus can suspend the laws of nature"**. Thus, the following day when they wanted to make him a king, Jesus seized the occasion to promise them that someday he would give a special **Bread** that would be **his own Body** (Jn. 6:51). Building upon their faith, Jesus advances his teaching on the Bread of Life by identifying himself as the **bread that came down from heaven (Jn.6:41)**. This accession has begun a serious debate between Jesus and the Jews. Jesus warned the Jews to stop murmuring and to listen to wisdom... "your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; ... I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the **bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world**" (Jn.6:51).

When did Jesus fulfill the awesome promise he made that day? At **the Last Supper**, when he blessed the bread and wine saying: "Take, eat, this is my body...Take, drink, this is the cup of my blood..." (Lk.22:19-20). For more than 2,000 years the Church has firmly taught that whenever the priest at Mass does what Jesus did at the Last Supper, **the bread and wine are changed in substance to the Lord's true flesh and blood**, even though the accidentals of the bread and wine remain the same (CCC. 1413; DS.1640). The accidentals of the bread and wine stay the same; the substance changes into the Lord's own body and blood **the real presence of Jesus Christ**. This marvelous change the Church calls transubstantiation.

Before I end my submission on the Bread of life, which we also called Holy Communion or Holy Eucharist or a Sacrament in the Catholic church, it is an outward sign in and through which we meet Jesus, who shares His life of grace with us. In this Sacrament, we do meet Jesus Himself who comes to us under forms of bread and wine **to nourish and strengthen us** for our journey to heaven. We see with human eyes what looks like bread and wine, but in the eyes of faith, we see the **Risen and Living, Lord Jesus Christ (CCC 1357; SC.47)**. St. Ignatius of Antioch spoke about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and "one bread that provides the **medicine for immortality (Ad Eph.20,2)**. Thomas Aquinas also affirmed the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the hymn Tantum Ergo: **"Down in adoration falling, this great Sacrament we hail. Faith will tell us Christ is present, when our human senses fail."**

Finally, dear brothers and sisters, let us take the admonishing of St. Paul serious, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer... a **person should examine himself before eating the bread and drinking the cup (1 Corinthians 11:27-30)**. Our Savior complained bitterly to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque about **our lukewarm love, ingratitude, and irreverence** as against his fervent and unconditional love. **St. Augustine wrote that Christ – the same in flesh as walked the earth – gave that same flesh to us to be consumed for our salvation. Moreover, says Augustine, no one eats that Flesh unless he has adored it... and we sin by not adoring it.** Therefore, let us do our best to acknowledge the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and to approach him with a heart full of love, faith, gratitude and reverence in order to **receive all the blessings in our worship. Amen!**