

## Biblical Reference to the Sacrament of the Eucharist

In Chapter 6 of John we see the multiplication of the loaves. The people were so impressed, they said: "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world." They wanted to carry him off to make him king, but he withdrew to the mountain alone.

Then comes the walking on water. Jesus' disciples went out to sea that evening and a strong wind comes up. Jesus comes walking toward them. They were afraid. Jesus reassures them: "It is I. Do not be afraid.

Then comes the "Bread of Life Discourse." The next day people came looking for Jesus. not necessarily because of the signs Jesus performed, but for more "free" bread. **(6:25-26)**

Jesus begins his discourse, his teaching about the Eucharist – of course his disciples won't fully understand what he is trying to teach them. What will be important is trusting in Jesus' words, not necessarily fully understanding.

**Jesus says: "Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. "**

They question Jesus:

**"What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" [6:30-31]**

Jesus answered them:

**"Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." [6:32-33]**

Not understanding that the bread Jesus is referring is not natural bread, they want this bread always:

**"Sir, give us this bread always." [6:34]**

Jesus responds:

***"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst. [6:35]***

The Jews had a hard time trying to understand what Jesus was saying – Jesus is the bread that came down from heaven? How can this be "He is the son of Joseph. We know his mother." They begin to doubt.

Jesus repeats himself:

***I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; [6:48-50]***

Jesus then says we need to eat this bread:

***Whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." [6:51]***

Now the Jews are really upset:

**"How can this man give us (his) flesh to eat?" [6:52]**

He repeats himself a second again:

**"Amen, amen, I say to you, *unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. [6:53]***

And then he states a third way:

***Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. [6:54]***

Then he says it a fourth way:

***For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. [6:55]***

He then says it a fifth time:

***Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. [6:56]***

He continues:

***Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever." [6:57-58]***

Many of his disciples had a hard time listening to these words:

**"This saying is hard; who can accept it?" [6:60]**

They don't say, "We don't understand it? Or "who can believe it?" It is so offensive that they can't even stand to listen to it. Jesus doesn't correct them or say "you got all wrong, I'm talking symbolically. He says:

**"Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? [6:61-62]**

And then he says:

***It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. [6:63]***

What does Jesus mean that his words are spirit and life? It would, probably, have been confusing. What Jesus is offering something that is beyond the physical realm – what gives life to our physical bodies is our spiritual soul. Jesus is giving us a clue, giving us a little theology for understanding the Eucharist: "I'll be offering you myself and the power of the Holy Spirit will bring life to the bread and wine."

***As a result of this, many (of) his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God." [6:66-69]***

It is clear that Jesus was teaching something important. The Twelve didn't understand, but they trusted – To whom shall we go?

- How can we understand it better?
- It seems silly to believe a piece of bread is something more than a piece of bread.
- Especially in our world today, when science seems to be the answer to our questions.
- Jesus is present in a sacramental way – a union of the visible and invisible – the physical takes upon a spiritual characteristic – a union of the divine with a physical substance..