

## HOMILY

August 19, 2018 - 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By Katy Beedle Rice

At a Teens Encounter Christ retreat I attended in college, a young seminarian gave a talk on the Eucharist. He told us about one of his favorite parts of seminary —waking up early in the morning to go to chapel and place the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance for an hour of adoration. From his time meditating in front of the body of Christ, he developed his own prayer for adoration and receiving Eucharist: “Jesus, I want to be you.”

We could see this as an audacious request. That we, in all our human frailty, might approach the Creator of the universe, truly present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, and beg to not just be like him, or to draw close to him, but to actually become him.

And yet, when we process forward for Communion and hear the words spoken, “the body of Christ” and “the blood of Christ,” our “amen” signifies not only our belief that the bread and wine have in fact been transformed into the sacred flesh of Jesus, but also that this is our own true nature and who we are called to be, the body of Christ alive and active in our world. St. Augustine puts it this way: “If you, therefore, are Christ’s body and members, it is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord’s table! It is your own mystery that you are receiving! You are saying ‘Amen’ to what you are” (Sermon 272).

In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells the gathered crowds, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.” Throughout the Gospel of John, remaining in Jesus is perhaps the most important duty of a disciple. Later in the Gospel, Jesus will use the word “remain” 12 times in 17 verses in the parable of the true vine (John 15:1-17).

Often, we might think that it is our actions that should be the focus of the spiritual life, and yet within this parable, Jesus gives the commandment to “remain” twice as many times as he mentions bearing fruit on the vine. Remaining is the starting point and the only way to carry out our mission as disciples — to bring the love of Christ to the broken places of our world.

If the request, “Jesus, I want to be you,” requires a certain amount of audacity on the part of the believer, we could say it also requires an equal amount of courage. To be the body and blood of Christ is to be bread that is broken and wine that is poured out. Jesus tells us, “The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” We know that Jesus “did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Our identity as Christ’s body and blood is not a status symbol or a conveyor of power, instead it marks us for a life of servanthood and radical self-gift to others. Our Lord is the “living bread that came down from heaven” who desires to be our food and drink. This is the humility that we are called to emulate: to seek to be nourishment for others instead of worrying about satisfying our own hungers for recognition or material possessions.

If Jesus’ call for us to be bread that is broken and wine that is poured out seems nearly impossible, we can take courage that he does not ask us to do it on our own. At the altar, we

encounter the bread of life, Jesus, the risen one, who desires to feed us with himself. In hope and trust, we pray “Jesus, I want to be you,” and then say “amen” to who we truly are.

## *Connections*

by [Dick Folger](#)

If you seek immortality on earth, read “Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow,” a short story by Kurt Vonnegut, originally written in 1953. It tells the story of the world in the year 2185 where everyone lives indefinitely as long as they take a particular drug that halts the aging process. It is a nightmare world where overpopulation has nearly depleted food resources. Then comes the invention of another medicine that reverses aging making everyone grow younger.

Today’s Gospel continues the themes of living bread and living water. When Jesus promises eternal life, he provides a complete heavenly world which can contain and fulfill that gift.

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