
 The Real Presence



I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in

me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. (John 6:51-59)

You are there, in that synagogue in Capernaum, and listen to Jesus talking about the importance of eating His body and drinking His blood. What thoughts are coming to your mind? What feelings permeate your heart? Many disciples had not been able to accept this preaching of Jesus and left him. How about you? Will you also turn back and no longer walk with him?

Imagine that you had not left him on that memorable day in Capernaum. You are again with Jesus and that small core group of His disciples in the Cenacle. By then, you know that Jesus' fate is sealed. His spiritual and moral revolution was unacceptable to the religious leaders of His time and the hope he gave to the masses about restoring the kingdom of Israel put Him on the wanting list of the Roman police. This meal is going to be memorable. You are given the bread and you hear the words: “This is my

body.”; then at the end of the supper you get the cup of wine and you hear Jesus saying: “This is the cup of my blood”. You do not need a collage degree to guess the meaning. Those words mean death. Separation of body and blood signifies death. After few hours the symbol becomes reality. You will never forget that supper. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26).

You miss Him. His sermons are still in your head and His miracles are a constant object to talks. Each time you go out, you look around hoping that maybe you will see Him again. You are not alone with this longing for His presence. In order to cope with this feeling you have begun to share what you have experienced when He was by your side. These experiences are your gospel. Others are doing the same. You listen to them and read their stories. In those moment,

you have strange feeling that He is with you again.

In the evenings you meet other believers. You eat, you chat, you talk about your joys and sorrows. All of you think that this world is heading for troubles. What a pity that Jesus is not here. He would have a solution. He would know how to draw goodness out of something sinful. Someone sighs, someone calls on Jesus' name, and someone begins to pray. All join in the prayer and again you sense that Jesus is among you.

Sabbath after sunset is special. All of you gather together on the so-called "Lord's Supper". Each brings something to eat, there is also bread and wine. You listen to the words of the Prophets foretelling the coming of Jesus and you have a common meal. During that meal you remember Jesus' words from that last supper: "This is my bread"; "this is the cup of my blood". And again you have the feeling that He is among you.

Then, you remember Jesus' promise: "I am with you always till the end of the ages" (Matt 28:20). Now, you understand its meaning. Together with other disciples, you are the "Body of Christ". That one loaf of bread, being broken during your Eucharistic celebration, signifies the unity of all disciples of Jesus. "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:17). You also understand why, each time you ponder of the history of salvation recorded in the Scriptures, you sense His presence. Those "Holy Scriptures" are also the "Body of Christ". "man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deut 8:3). Finally, by now you understand the meaning of Jesus' words from that synagogue in Capernaum about eating His body and drinking His blood. Jesus' de-

ath, His life for the life of the world, gives new life to you and to all who believe. He is the spiritual food on our journey to eternity: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6:51).

Today, you are in a church, among other brothers and sisters who believe in Jesus, and you listen to the words of Jesus spoken centuries ago at the synagogue in Capernaum. What thoughts come to your mind? What feelings rise in your heart? Many people look at life as a game and not as a journey to eternity. Christian community, Gospel, heavenly bread, such words are not part of their daily dictionary. How about you?

Today, you are in a church, among other brothers and sisters. Are you aware that there are many Christians who long to be in your situation and yet they cannot? They will spend this day without community, without the Scriptures, and even without a meal. They live in a country where having the Scriptures can get them into prison or even on the gallows; they live in a place where no Christian community can be found; their material situation is so dire that they cannot afford a meal. They long for the "Body of Christ" and this longing that springs forth from their deep faith allows them to experience His real and transforming presence in their lives.

The Risen Lord manifests His presence in many different ways. His presence in the blessed Sacrament is just but one. Let us not forget that He is also present in a community that worship Him and in the Scriptures that tells the history of salvation. It all points to the fulfillment of His amazing promise: "I am with you always till the end of the ages".

The prayer of a righteous person has great power

- Let us pray for Hai Tang and her little son; may the healing and blessing of God be always upon them;
- Let us pray for Li Jiang Ting; may the Lord heal his body and spirit;
- Let us pray for the soul of Andrew Cai who unexpectedly left his family and this world; may the merciful Lord welcome His into His kingdom;

May God bless you all.