



We Don't Really Eat Christ's Body - Or Do We?

This article by Mary Beth Bonnaci could be used to educate young people about the Real Presence prior to participating in Eucharistic Adoration.

It's easy to go to Mass on auto pilot. You genuflect, go into the pew, sit down, stand up, kneel, mumble prayers, think about your girlfriend or your plans for the afternoon, mumble prayers, stand again, shake someone's hand, kneel, get up, walk up the aisle, receive the body and blood of Christ...

Hey, wait a minute! Receive the body of Christ? Take His actual flesh into your mouth and into your digestive system, eat the flesh of a guy who lived 2000 years ago? You do that? You do it without even thinking about it?

Maybe it's time to do a little thinking. Do you believe that's what you're doing? Or is Communion just another part of the Mass for you? Do you take it seriously, or is it just one more hoop to jump through before you get to go home and talk on the phone?

A lot of Catholics aren't too clear on this whole concept of the Eucharist. They're not too sure what it is. The Church doesn't really believe it's the actual body and blood of Christ, does it? It's just a symbolic thing, right? A meal, right? I Mean, otherwise it'd be too gross to even think about, much less do.

Well, guess again. The Church does believe the Eucharist is the real body and blood of Christ. After the words of consecration ("This is My body ..." and "This is My blood..."), the bread and wine are no longer bread and wine. They've become Jesus Christ: body, blood, soul and divinity. He's there.

So how did we come up with this one? Did a bunch of bishops get together? ("Hey guys, here's a good one. We'll make them believe that the wine becomes blood. That'll freak them out!") No. We don't need to make this stuff up. Like everything else, we believe it because Christ told us it's true.

It all happened in the Gospel of John. Jesus was teaching His disciples, talking about bread. And He said something really astounding. He said, "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 ... for My flesh is real food indeed and My blood is real drink indeed" (Jn 6:53-55). He was pretty adamant on the point.

The disciples figured He didn't really mean it. They asked again. And again. He insisted He meant it. "Real food indeed. Real drink indeed." They should've known when He said, "Truly, truly." He wasn't fooling around.

They naturally freaked out. Living the commandments was fine. Loving your neighbor was nice. But cannibalism wasn't really their gig. The next chapter says, "After this many of His disciples drew back and no longer went about with Him" (Jn 6:66). He lost a lot of support. But He never said, "Come on, guys! I didn't really mean it! It's just symbolic." He let them go. Christ wouldn't do that over a misunderstanding. He meant what He said.



So how do we get this bread which is really His body? He told us at the Last Supper. "And He took bread and when He had given thanks He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." And likewise he took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (Lk 22:19-20).

So Christ made things pretty clear. Unless we eat His flesh, we have no life within us. Receiving the Eucharist is a big deal. It's essential to our life in Him. It's essential to staying on the right side of the gap between God and man.

It's a pretty awesome thing when you think about it. God, the big God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who created the universe and holds it in existence -- He comes into you in a very real, very physical way. He becomes tangibly present in your body, He gets as close as He possibly could.

When you understand that, you get a little better understanding of people who go to Mass every day. They're not just going to sit down, stand up, mumble prayers and kneel. They're going to receive the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ. They're going to drink Him into their lives, literally, so that He remains present to them. They're going so that, with Him constantly present, they'll be better able to love as He loves. They'll be stronger Christians and live better lives. They don't go because they're really good people. At least that's not why I go. I go because I need a lot of help.

All of this tells us something about how we should approach Communion. He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Not "Do this thinking about your homework," or "Do this without paying attention." Receiving the Eucharist is a profound act. It's as close as you'll get to God in this life. If we want to receive all the benefit we can from it, we need to have the right attitude. Our approach needs to be prayerful, respectful and reverent.

We also need to approach the Eucharist "clean." We can't just sin all week, and then expect to receive the body and blood of Christ. Receiving worthily means that going to Him with a clear conscience. If you've committed a serious sin which you haven't confessed, to go to Communion would be another serious sin. It's a "slap in the face" to God. Far from strengthening your faith, receiving Communion unworthily will diminish it. I believe it was Voltaire who said that the way to lose your faith is to commit a serious sin and then go to Communion. It's a "grace drain" and it's really wrong.

So the Eucharist is serious business. It's the best thing we have going in our day to day life -- constant, ongoing contact with the living God. It's our "daily bread" that nourishes our spiritual life. It provides our recommended daily intake of grace.

Don't take the Eucharist lightly. Pay attention to the consecration. Something really incredible is happening. And don't settle for "starvation rations." Receive the Eucharist often. It's your spiritual food. You need it.

Source - <http://www.mbprice.com/therealpresence/yth-eatchristsbody.htm>



On Eucharistic Adoration...

Have you ever been over at a good friend's house for supper, someone that you really enjoy being with, and when you finish eating, you want to spend more time with that friend, so you talked in the living room, or went outside on the porch? Eating a meal with your friend was satisfying, but you still wanted to relax and just hang around for just a little while longer.

Well, since the Mass is the source and summit of our Christian life, it means a lot to us; it is a holy meal where we partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus. But like any friend, we need some extra time together to develop our friendship with Jesus even more. We can do this with Jesus in our adoration of Him before the tabernacle or by worshiping Jesus exposed in the monstrance for adoration. So be a good friend to Jesus, and stick around a while longer.

Thirty minutes isn't long enough to...

- List all the things in your life for which you are thankful...
- Name all the people who ever touched your life with their faith...
- Consider all the sins you have committed...
- Find at least one element of Christ in all your classmates...
- Name the traits of Christ in all your family members...
- List all the ways that God has blessed you...
- Consider all the folks you would like God to bless...
- Name all those people who need your prayers...
- List all the reasons you are glad you're alive...
- Name all the reasons you should love God...
- Close your eyes and put yourself totally and completely in the presence of God...