

“Unless You Eat my Flesh”

Today’s Sunday Gospel reading was: “Jesus said to the crowds: “I myself am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever; the bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. I solemnly assure you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” (John 6:51-53)

My brothers and sisters, let’s seriously take a moment to think about something, both of us, Catholics and Protestants, because in reality the final result of what we both believe here concerning this passage is what is important.

A large percentage of our world proclaims to be Christian. Yet, our world is a mess. We are in constant turmoil, fighting one another, killing each other, demanding “my way or the highway,” and it is being done in the Name of God. This chaos exists because too many of us Christians are not living what we profess to be, otherwise our world would be just as it was briefly after Pentecost Sunday. Let’s allow today’s Scripture reading give us one reason why we are in a mess.

No human being can touch another human being without feeling something between them. We may not be aware of what we feel, but we feel. When it comes to sharing love, we definitely feel love from any touch. And it doesn’t make any difference if our eyes are open or closed. We feel the love flowing between the other person and ourselves. If we don’t, then there is a problem. That is natural to all of us.

We Catholics accept the literal interpretation of the words of Jesus above. Therefore, when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, when our hand touches His Body, when we drink from the cup of His Precious Blood, our body is touching His Body. As a result it is only natural that we will immediately experience a love flowing between us. Two bodies touching each other in love always gives a love experience, even if we do not physically see the other person! That’s natural! But, is that what happens when we receive Him in Holy Communion?

We Protestants believe that His words are symbolic, that we are to eat and drink His Holy Word, the Bible. That means that when our body touches His Body in his Holy Word, then it is only natural that we will experience love flowing from His Holy Word. When someone who loves us speaks loving words to us, we feel them and respond with loving words. That’s natural. Is that what happens when we receive his Loving Word in a Holy Communion?

Thousands of years ago Socrates said something that we know to be true, “Knowledge is not virtue.” What we believe resides in our head. It is knowledge. It is not virtue. If what we believe in our head does not arrive and become united with our heart, then we will not become a better person.

Therefore, if we Catholics believe that the consecrated bread and wine is Jesus' Body and Blood, and if we have no experience of love flowing between us when we receive Him in Holy Communion, then our belief has no influence on our heart. We are merely performing a ritual, and rituals do not change the heart. We do not become a better or virtuous person.

Therefore, if we Protestant believe that the Word of Jesus is to be our food and drink and if we have no experience of love flowing between us and His Holy Word when we commune, then our belief has no influence on our heart. We are merely performing a ritual of memorization, and intellectual dissertation, and that does not change the heart. We do not become a better or virtuous person.

St. Paul told us that if we know all the mysteries of the world and yet have not love, it values us nothing. (I Cor. 13:1-3) In another place he says, "He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself. That is why many among you are sin and infirm." (I Cor. 11:29-30)

Unless the mind and heart unite as one, we are not becoming an integrated virtuous person. We see it happening before us every day, e.g. an adolescent living in their passions and an adult living only within their intellect. Both must work together for an integrated personality. If we were living a life where love unites our heart and mind, then we would be bearing the fruits of love that St Paul writes about in 1 Cor. 13. The spiritual discernment here for knowing where all of us are is "know the tree by its fruit."

How do we answer these questions: Why do we desire to keep our relationship with Jesus on the intellectual level? Why are we afraid to admit that the way we love one another is the same way we love Him? Why are we so afraid of experiencing love from Jesus?

Lord, help my unbelief! Then, I will remove the fear in my heart because I do love you!

Teo
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