

St. Frances Cabrini - Lebanon, TN
Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year B
August 12, 2018

1 Kgs 19:4-8

Eph 4:30-5:2

Jn 6:41-51

For the past three weeks, we have been reading what is called “The Bread of Life Discourse” in John’s gospel. It is a time when we deviate from the Synoptic Gospels in their respective years to read from John’s gospel. Did you know we read this every year at this time? Why? It is the foundation of the Eucharist.

So let’s do a lesson in the Catechism. The Mass is made up of two main sections; the Liturgy and the Eucharist. The Liturgy is our readings; Old Testament, Epistles, and Gospels. The Eucharist is the main thing. It is Jesus, true body and blood, soul and divinity.

You have heard me quote a Gallup poll taken on Catholic attitudes toward Holy Communion. The poll showed serious confusion among Catholics about one of the most basic beliefs of the Church.

- Only 30 percent of those surveyed believe they are actually receiving the Body and Blood, soul and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.
- 29 percent think they are receiving bread and wine which symbolize the spirit and teachings of Jesus and, in so doing, are expressing their attachment to His person and words.
- 10 percent understand their action to be receiving bread and wine in which Jesus is present.
- 23 percent hold that they are receiving what has become the Body and Blood of Christ because of their personal belief. So if they don’t believe it, then it is not the real presence of Christ.

Now I am going to remind you of something I mentioned before. Did you know that the Episcopal church believes in the real presence of Jesus in the form of bread? Did you know that our Lutheran brothers and sisters believe in the real presence in the form of bread? Yet only 30 percent of Catholics believe it to be the real presence of the Jesus.

This does not surprise me. Why you may ask? It is how we approach the communion. How do we receive it? Do we stroll up the aisle shaking peoples hand? Do we shift our gum around in our mouth? Do we say thank you instead of Amen? Or, do you give Jesus the reverence he deserves?

I want to read what the Catechism says about receiving the Eucharist. "To prepare for worthy reception of this sacrament, the faithful should observe the fast required in their Church. Bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest."

Here is some more details when approaching for Communion; "When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his head before the sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the body of the Lord from the minister. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand." This becomes your personal choice. If you receive Holy Communion under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the precious blood.

Now, I want to ask a question of you. What if this church offered a gift certificate to your favorite restaurant if you wear a certain type of shirt? Would you do it? What if we offered tickets to see, let's say, Taylor Swift or Keith Urban if you skip down this aisle? What if we offered cash if you come to church?

We may be willing to do something for something we want. Do we want the Body of Christ? Are we willing to give him the reverence he deserves for the greatest gift we will ever receive?

This homily may have been uncomfortable for some. Sometimes tough messages are required. Think about this the next time you come up for communion. Ask yourself if you believe, do you really believe. Do you believe enough to give Christ the reverence He deserves? Or, would you be one of the disciples in the gospel who would have walked away in disbelief?