

## St Pius & St Anthony 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year B2

*John 6:51 "I am the living bread that came down from heaven"*

Jesus is 'living bread', those are His words (*John 6:51 and not just once- he said as much in verse 35 & 48 too*) What does He mean by-'living bread'? What might a 'living bread' be like? A food that is alive? Like a bread that can grow of itself, maybe it 'self-generates' and you can keep coming back to it and it is still multiplying. Maybe something like what they call Amish Friendship Bread starter (the sourdough yeast origin of it, that can be split over and over and shared out multiple times, kept over weeks, months (generations?)) Like such a **growing** bread, the 'living bread' of Jesus, can feed and feed and feed from the same source of himself, so that we keep returning again and again to be fed of Him. Or another example of such a continual, ongoing food delivery system might be something like a vibrant growing bed of spring lettuce greens that you can continue to cut leaves off daily to eat and keep coming back each day for its new growth for the whole season (or as the temperature stays in range for its growth).

I can also think of a personal learning experience I went through as a young bachelor cook, being told how easy and delicious a homemade white bean soup was, so I tried it. I bought a bag of dried beans, and poured them into a pot with water overnight to soak like they said to, and what a surprise, the next morning when I came into the kitchen and saw swollen beans filling up to rim of the pot, so that I ended up cooking two pots of bean soup - It was like the beans were alive and grew out of the original pot! But all these examples of 'food that is alive or grows' are nothing compared to the abundance that Jesus brings to us as a 'growing bread' - such as we saw in the miracle that started off this set of readings from John 6 these past weeks- when Jesus multiplied five loaves & two fish to become enough to feed over 5, 000 with 12 overflowing baskets left over.

Yet even more, today's gospel has Jesus teaching us that not only is He a 'living bread' always growing and multiplying to feed us, but also that our feeding on Him, accomplishes two things: 1) it creates 'life within you' (6:53) and 2) creates bond of communion so that He 'remains in me and I in him' (6:56). So this 'living bread' that is Jesus, not only continually sustains us, but also keeps us in contact-relationship with Him. This is so amazing that our receiving/consuming the Bread of Life-Jesus, that this is His chosen **method/means** of entering into us and remaining with us. I find this is exactly what the Gospel John meant calling Jesus, the 'Word made flesh, who dwelt among us' -*dwells within us because we take Him in as food* (Jn 1:14). Recall that of all places too, Jesus is born in 'Bethlehem' Hebrew word meaning 'House of Bread' -as living bread He enters the dwelling of

our house-body (Matt 2:1) So Jesus' becoming 'bread' so that we can be continually fed by him, also keeps us in intimate communion with Him since He then lives within us (*'one who feeds on me will have life because of me' 6:57 & 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him' 6:56*). Is there any closer communion a person can experience than from within one's own self? It is astounding that Jesus chose to enter our lives by becoming our food to ingest and process, allowing us to be one with Him, as food that is metabolized, grows into and is mingled into our own selves. St Augustine even says as much in one of His Eucharistic sermons (#272), as he tells Christians to "Be what you see; become what you receive." And we do, as the food that is Jesus, grows into us through our continual reception of Him, over and over – His Body and Blood are digested into the makeup of our flesh and blood, ultimately transforming us. Related to this great insight of St Augustine that we are to grow into what we consume, young people are told such things all the time. So many times at our family reunions when I was a kid, we would all hear my aunt repeat to her daughter again, "If you don't start eating something other than Cheetos, you are going to turn into one!" (*You are, what you eat!*) I get my aunt's point, and it is similar to what St Augustine is saying, that by receiving Christ, He can change us from within to become more like Him. We do become and are changed by what it is we take into ourselves.

But we do hear some 'hesitation to believe' in the gospel today, some questions that might hold someone back from accepting Christ. In John 6:52 the crowd asks, "How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?" We might find ourselves asking such questions, like 'How do I really *explain* this idea of Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist-His actual Body-Blood-given me through appearance of bread and wine?' I hear such a question as one about its 'mechanics' (just how does this work), or a question of its physical process of how Jesus can go on and on feeding us Body-Blood, when physically there is only so much physical form or material shape to Him to go around? But our hang-up with such an objection here, is a matter of its physicality our expectation of material limitations (what is impossible for us, is POSSIBLE with God-Matt 19:26)

I know people may say they have been 'chewed-on' when a hostile complaining opponent gives them a verbal thrashing? Or maybe after a person 'tears into us' then leaves but then comes back at us, we do say, "Oh no, they're coming back for another bite?" But with Jesus it is altogether different, because He has always stretched beyond any physical limits (The gospels continually demonstrate such matter-bending miracles-recall this is the same Jesus who walked on water, calmed storms at sea, healed every illness and even raised people from the dead-He can make matter do what no one has seen before)

human can). His Body and Blood can endlessly manifest and grow, always providing that ongoing nourishment that we need. We can keep coming back time and again, to Him for our soul's food and He always provides – I'd say it is the 'principle of resurrection' within Him – ongoing life! His mysterious ever-living, ever-growing Body and Blood. God is just that, inexhaustible and infinite. He is plenitude and abundance itself, as we saw in the multiplication of loaves & fishes, feeding over and over from the same starter of five loaves & two fish (Jn 6), or His abundant overflowing miracle of the best of wines He makes from water (Jn 2).

Jesus can do it! And He does in every celebration of the Holy Eucharist- every mass celebrated. Here He is, again feeding us with His Body and Blood.