

St Pius-St Anthony 19th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B

Jesus drops a great line in the gospel today. Of course, we are still in the 'Bread of Life' Series of teachings from John chapter 6 today, and Jesus suggests that a time can come when 'they shall all be taught by God'. Maybe he is quoting Isaiah 54:13 about coming generations that will be taught by the Lord God Himself (not a mediator-messenger by God Himself), or I think more likely that Jesus is referring to a reference in Jeremiah 31:34 describing an image of God actually 'writing his Law on our own hearts-directly on to our human hearts'. Isn't that something? Such a direct divine download of God's law into our hearts reminds me of a scene from the movie series 'The Matrix' (kind of a 'computer-y' science fiction movie) when the main character Neo, (who has this computer to human brain interface-but, funny that for it to be so futuristic, it still uses a cable!) wants to acquire new skills of jiu-jitsu or Karate and so it just means downloading the file into his brain (what a dream to think a person can acquire new skills with zero effort-when I was a kid, our version of such thinking was that you 'slept with the textbook under your pillow-as if osmosis would occur!) Of course, that was just a movie, but it comes to mind when I hear Jesus say, "They shall all be taught by God". It conjures up such a direct communication (God to us) of God's law-commands: that God could be so accessible and present to us as we learn His ways (maybe like His teaching voice right in our ears). Perhaps this is what we refer to when we say, our 'conscience' is God's voice in us leading us to right, moral action. There is another Old Testament quote that implies such 'divine downloading' of His law into our hearts. It is Deuteronomy 30:12-14 where it says, *"This command is not far off and distant...It is not in the heavens, that you should say, "Who will go up to the heavens to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?" Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?" No, it is something very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it."* I find that this is what Jesus is talking about: of us all being 'taught' by God. And it makes even so much more sense as we look that He says this, in the discourse about the 'Holy Eucharist'.

Now, I have to include this warning: we are reading John's gospel. And John has a tendency to 'get deep fast'. He drives straight to the core of matters quickly. He reminds me of when we were kids and our family would go camping on our grandparents place back on the Ohio River in Daviess County, and we would go swimming. They always told us to have life jackets

along with us, because the river bank and the lead into the water could get deep fast- they said, it could be like walking off a shelf-you stand in four foot of water and then it could drop in one step to ten feet! Well, John's gospel can go along telling a story of Jesus, and then suddenly he moves into a long lecture of deep theology. I think that happens today with this reading. So, what about this line 'They all shall be taught by God'. I find Jesus to be saying that this 'divine download' teaching: it is the Holy Eucharist. Receiving Christ internally this way as food taken into our bodies, is like our 'being taught directly' by Him. This immediate communication is like a 'direct insight' or interior illumination given through the act of being fed with this bread become His Body and wine become His Blood. And like a good teacher Jesus is repetitive about this; remember that at the Last Supper when he surprisingly identifies Himself as bread to be consumed ('this is my body'), right afterward he says, "Do this (repeat this) in memory of me" (Luke 22:19) So we are taught directly by Jesus in these actions of mass every week. Also like a good teacher, Jesus summarizes all of this, His lesson, in the last line we read today, when He says, "the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." Three points: Bread given, His flesh and for the world's life. Jesus is telling us that 1) He reveals Himself to us as food, and 2) this food is His own life (sacrifice is what makes it alive-real) and 3) He gives it **for** the life of others. Or in other words, Jesus nourishes us with His own life, becoming our food-giving Himself to us, that the world may go on. As I hinted at earlier, John goes deep fast, but there is a lot to pray over in these few words Jesus gives today. Yet, most importantly, we receive all we need to know through each devout act of 'communion' with Him in the Eucharist we receive. Jesus is the Bread of Life for us, come down from heaven to fill our hearts with all the nourishment they desire. What a gift Jesus offers us!