

Jesus speaks to the people that he fed with the loaves and fishes, “The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh!”

This shocking thing that he said was a promise that he would give us the food we need that would strengthen us so that we could be prepared to live as his disciples and sacrifice for others as he sacrificed himself for us.

It’s so important that we listen carefully to this statement because Jesus is saying, “I will give you bread, that bread will be my flesh!” Jesus didn’t say, “I will give you flesh to eat as if it was bread”, he said, “The bread that I will give.” That means that he was going to give us bread, real bread not symbolic bread, real bread, that would somehow be his body.

But too many of the people heard only “I will give you my flesh!”

Even though Jesus had proven time and time again that he had control over all the elements of creation, by curing the sick, walking on water, raising the dead, and he even proved that he could master simple bread by feeding 5000 people with a few loaves, the people weren’t prepared to accept the fact that he could change bread into his body.

And if you don’t believe he can do that, then the only way to make sense of what he is saying is to think that he means to give you his actual body, when what he said was, “I will give you bread!”

There are no symbols here, we are talking about real bread, ordinary bread, not bread as a symbolic representation for food in general but regular, baked, hold-in-your-hand bread! And so we are also talking about his real body, not a symbol representing his body, but his real body.

Jesus didn't explain right there and then how this was going to happen, he didn't tell them, 'Wait awhile and you'll see, when I get up to Jerusalem for the Passover meal in the upper room, I'll show you how it's going to work.' No, he just told them what would happen and asked them to believe.

Just believe. In the gospel two weeks ago, Jesus said to this same crowd of people, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent!" And so, he was challenging them to show their faith and accept what he was saying, even though they couldn't understand what it meant or how it might happen. To simply say, "I don't know how it works, Lord, but I believe!"

But the people weren't really looking for eternal answers, they were only looking for more bread, and since they wouldn't believe, they couldn't even hear what he was saying.

This idea is so important to us that the Church uses 5 Sundays in a row to read this one section of John's gospel, chapter 6. It started three weeks ago with the feeding of the five thousand, and continues each week up to next week when we hear how many of his disciples turned away from him because of this promise to give us that bread which would be his body.

These five weeks he is speaking to the same group of people that he fed, so he might expect them to have some faith in his teachings. These five weeks he is talking to us, as well, through the gospel, with the same message and the same reassurance.

He says, “You know I can do all these impossible things, just believe that I can do this thing too!”

It would be a good thing for all of us to take a quiet moment at home, go to John’s Gospel, chapter 6, and read this whole section in one sitting and then pray about it, pray to have the faith to believe this very important part of our Lord’s message.

Surely we are here today, in this church, because we believe this. We are here because we believe that when Father Neil follows the instructions that Jesus gave us at the last supper that Jesus himself will be here with us. The bread that we will receive at holy communion will be his real body just as he promised.

We believe that this bread will be life for us and for the whole world just as he promised. We believe that Jesus offers his body in the bread to be consumed, to be sacrificed for our good so that we may sacrifice ourselves for others.

The mass is a sacrifice, and we must be present to offer that sacrifice. We are not at mass to be entertained, we are not at mass to socialize with others, we are not at mass to pass judgement about the quality of the singers and servers and readers and preachers.

The mass is not offered for us to get something out of it because we will only get out of it what we put into it. It is offered as a sacrifice to God as he has commanded us to do and it is offered in the way Christ taught us to do it because he commanded that we do this in memory of him.

Jesus fed the hungry in his time, he even fed 5000 at once, but he didn't feed everybody and he didn't feed them forever but he did give us a way to make sure that we can be fed forever and we can feed whoever comes to him and believes in him with the food that is the life of the world.

When we have eaten that food, when we have received the body of Jesus and he is an intimate part of our very physical being, then we are called to follow his lead, to act as he would have acted for the good of others and for their salvation.

Our bodies will have changed because of that food that we ate and we are called to make sure that the world can see that we have changed by the way we live and the sacrifices we make.

The life of the world can be affected by so many things, by sharing our blessings, by helping the needy, by seeking peace, by taking care of the environment, by dealing honestly and fairly with others, by trying hard to simply understand one another.

Jesus gave us bread for the life of the world, and it is now up to us who eat that bread to live that life for all the world to see.