

## Homily: Aug. 22, 2021

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

Today we celebrate God who gives us eternal life—the real life-- through his Son, Jesus. And Jesus will challenge us to choose him as our food and drink so that we really do have life of God in us. At times our faith may be weak, and so we confidently call upon our compassionate God, “Lord, have mercy.”

Joshua asked his people to decide whom they would serve, and they answered, “We will serve the Lord for he is our God.” Similarly, Jesus asked his disciples, and also asks us today, “Do you also want to leave [me]? Peter answered, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.” What is our answer?

I learned from a biblical expert that the main problem presented in today’s Gospel is not the issue of Jesus inviting people to eat his flesh and drink his blood. The main problem was that many of Jesus’ disciples simply couldn’t accept Jesus presenting himself as the HOLY ONE OF GOD—as the one from heaven—from God. Therefore, they couldn’t tolerate Jesus saying that his words give spirit and eternal life SO MUCH SO that his words are BREAD OF LIFE. Jesus had told his disciples that everything he proclaimed came from God. Therefore, his words were [and still are] as important as food without which one cannot live. First of all, we must believe Jesus is the Holy One of God.

That was why Jesus went a step further and said, “My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.” He was trying to convince his disciples—AND US—that his very being is the LIFE OF GOD. Therefore, Jesus wanted his disciples to EAT HIM UP. “Whoever eats me will draw life from me—which is the life of the Father,” Jesus said. We know that the Father, God, is LOVE. So, to put it another way: we eat Jesus so that we have the LIFE OF LOVE living in us. We must remember that TRUE LOVE DOES NOT DIE. That’s why Peter said, “You, Jesus, have the words of ETERNAL life. We are invited to believe that Jesus has the words and IS THE WORD OF LOVE THAT NEVER DIES.” When we eat Jesus with our ears and ultimately in the Eucharist consume him in communion, Jesus’ eternal life and love LIVES IN US. LOVE becomes our flesh and blood, too, with the hope that LOVE becomes the essence of our very being and of our whole way of thinking, speaking and acting.

This fantastic TRUTH, this wonderful MESSAGE, is what many disciples of Jesus ultimately found too difficult, too heretical, too much to believe coming from a human being. How about you and I? Has Jesus gone too far with the way he presents himself? No! Not at all! Hopefully we can speak up like Peter did, “Jesus, you have the message of everlasting life. You are the Holy One of God.”

Hopefully we further believe that Jesus wants us to realize that WE TOO ARE HOLY ONES OF GOD. We need eat Jesus and his words so that we can see everyone else as holy ones of God, as Jesus also sees each and every one of us.

Why is this important? Because we still experience racism and discrimination. Many of our sisters and brothers, who are not western and white, encounter rejection and injustices because they are colored and/or originate from eastern or southern countries. As I speak our country is receiving the next wave of Muslim Afghani sisters and brothers fleeing from death threats and danger in Afghanistan, because they once helped the U.S. during many years of war there. At the same time we are also receiving refugees coming to our Mexican-US borders. So, during these days we must renew our belief that ALL human beings are HOLY CHILDREN OF GOD. We are ALL called to be holy ones of God—to be loving, compassionate and merciful as is God.

“Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

We may add, “You, Jesus, are our food and drink for God’s life in us.” AMEN and AMEN!