

GOSPEL

Jn 6:51-58

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

Jesus said to the crowd:

‘I am the living bread which has come down from heaven.

Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.’

Then the Jews started arguing with one another: ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’ they said. Jesus replied:

‘I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you.

Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood

has eternal life,

and I shall raise him up on the last day.

For my flesh is real food

and my blood is real drink.

He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me

and I live in him.

As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me.

This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate:

they are dead,

but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.’

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / B

18 AUGUST 2024

LIVE FOREVER

What does it mean for us to live forever, to abide in Christ and have Christ abide in us? This is the question that lingers for me. I invite you to ponder too.

The reading from Proverbs brings an invitation from Wisdom to a banquet where a question is raised: Will you leave the way of ignorance and join the way of insight? This is the only way forward to life. This snippet links to the Gospel where the Bread of Heaven discourse continues by reiterating the final sentence from last week's Gospel. We observe that 'Whoever eats of this bread [the living bread from heaven] will live forever' is replicated in the last line, 'But the one who eats this bread will live forever.' These sentences frame the 'Amen, Amen' ('I tell you solemnly') saying given in response to the Judeans dispute about eating Jesus' flesh. Life, eternal life, is only possible for those who partake of Jesus' flesh and blood.

These readings remind us how difficult it must have been for first century followers to understand fully who Jesus is and what he offered. For the Johannine community the reinterpretation of the Mosaic Law to a new understanding of the Christ causes distress. It isn't that easy for us to understand today. What we might understand is our deep need to be in communion in the body and blood of Christ in the community. How much we missed that during the pandemic. Blessed, broken, shared and given: the body of Christ, Amen.

Dr Rosemary Canavan

FIRST READING

Prov 9:1-6

A reading from the book of Proverbs.

Come and eat my bread, drink the wine I have prepared.

Wisdom has built herself a house, she has erected her seven pillars, she has slaughtered her beasts, prepared her wine, she has laid her table.

She has despatched her maidservants and proclaimed from the city's heights: 'Who is ignorant? Let him step this way.'

To the fool she says,

'Come and eat my bread,

drink the wine I have prepared!

Leave your folly and you will live, walk in the ways of perception.'

■ **The word of the Lord.**

RESP PSALM

Ps 33:2-3, 10-15. R. v. 9

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

1. I will bless the Lord at all times, / his praise always on my lips; / in the Lord my soul shall make its boast. / The humble shall hear and be glad. **R.**

2. Revere the Lord, you his saints. / They lack nothing, those who revere him. / Strong lions suffer want and go hungry / but those who seek the Lord lack no blessing. **R.**

3. Come, children, and hear me / that I may teach you the fear of the Lord. / Who is he who longs for life / and many days, to enjoy his prosperity? **R.**

4. Then keep your tongue from evil / and your lips from speaking deceit. / Turn aside from evil and do good; / seek and strive after peace. **R.**



SECOND READING

Eph 5:15-20

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

Be watchful that you may know the will of God.

Be very careful about the sort of lives you lead, like intelligent and not like senseless people. This may be a wicked age, but your lives should redeem it. And do not be thoughtless but recognise what is the will of the Lord. Do not drug yourselves with wine, this is simply dissipation; be filled with the Spirit. Sing the words and tunes of the psalms and hymns when you are together, and go on singing and chanting to the Lord in your hearts, so that always and everywhere you are giving thanks to God who is our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 6:56

Alleluia, alleluia!

All who eat my flesh and drink my blood live in me and I in them, says the Lord. Alleluia!