

June 18, 2017 Bread of Life Homily: In the German language there is a delightful proverb, which is a play on words "*Man ist was man isst*". Translated: "A man is what he eats." How are we to understand this saying? Perhaps a commercial now appearing on television may be helpful. It is an advertisement for PediaSure, a health drink for youth. A girls' soccer game is in progress. Two mothers stand on the sideline, watching their daughters play. The daughter of one health challenged girl is depicted as a bag of French fries. Her diet is the problem. The daughter of the second mother sees her child score the winning goal. She kicks the ball through a player who has been changed into a donut another casualty of an unhealthy diet. The ball sails through the hole in the donut into the net. Game over! The mother of the girl who drinks PediaSure and who scores the winning goal then remarks, "Kids are what they eat".

As Catholics, we can truly say with conviction, "A Catholic is what he or she eats". It is interesting to note that in the sixth chapter of John's gospel the verb "eat" is heard no fewer than six times in verses 51-58. In Greek, it is descriptive. It means "chewing" "munching" and "masticating". Jesus speaks of his flesh as the direct object of eating. The same flesh and blood offered by Christ on the cross and then resurrected to glory is given to us in the Eucharist. Jesus is the LIVING bread and the bread of LIFE. One of my parishioners, Edward Martin, a scripture scholar in his own right, has this to say: "In the new creation, Jesus bequeathed to us his very own life under the symbols of bread and wine to carry the realities of his flesh (nourishment) and blood (life). The big difference from usual food is instead of it being absorbed and becoming part of us again, in the realities of the new creation, in this case we are absorbed into what we eat, if we have the right disposition, thereby ever growing in mystical communion with the risen Christ".

We are "partakers of the one loaf". (1Cor. 10-17) What must this say about us, about who we are and how we act? Have we ever paused for a moment to reflect on the love and goodness found in ourselves? It is the "Bread of Life" we eat taking effect in us. It is truly astonishing that Christ has become part of us! The words of St. Paul are, quite literally, true: "It is not I but Christ who lives in me". On the other hand, have we ever stopped to think how much worse off we would be if we did not sustain ourselves with the "living bread come down from heaven" because, "a person is what he or she eats"!

One of the most remarkable women of the last century was a bedridden German woman named Therese Neumann. As strange as it may seem, this extraordinary Catholic was on Adolf Hitler's enemies list. The chancellor of the Third Reich feared her because she survived on the Bread of Life, Holy Communion, and, aside from water, nothing else. Her life was sustained by eating the Bread of Life. Not surprisingly, she attracted the attention of the faithful and others who were simply overcome by curiosity. Others were downright hostile to her as a woman of faith. A supernatural mystery sometimes meets with suspicion and disbelief.

Let us recall the deeply disturbing words of those disciples who turned away from Jesus as recorded in John's sixth chapter, "This saying is hard, who can accept it?" And the words they found offensive: "For my flesh is true food and my blood true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him". (Jn.6:55-56)

Our Lord's Body and Blood is a gift unlike any other. May we take advantage of the many opportunities the church affords us to receive our Lord in the sacrament entrusted to his church. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Amen!