

There is a famous episode of the classic TV series, “Twilight Zone,” which is entitled, “To Serve Man.” As many of you remember the story involves a race of aliens who come to earth, offering to end all the hunger, disease, and conflicts of the world. Humanity embraces the offer, and eventually the aliens invite the humans to visit their planet. It is only too late for one of the main characters to find out that the book the aliens left behind, entitled “To Serve Man,” is actually a cook book!

What does this have to do with celebrating the Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, which we do this Sunday? In the TV show, the connection between service and being fed results in a surprising and horrifying conclusion, to the delight of many “Twilight Zone” fans. In the Eucharist, where we share Jesus’ Body and Blood poured out for us, there is a real connection between being fed and being of service.

In our Gospel reading from John, Jesus, contrasting Himself with the manna that came to the Israelites in the desert, says, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” Later on, He says, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.” In sacrificing Himself, Jesus has given life to the world. In giving us a way to share in His Body and Blood, Jesus has given us food for the journey to eternal life. Jesus feeds us with Himself. In a special way, we take Jesus into ourselves. In a most intimate way, we are in *communion* with Him.

This intimate connection with Jesus in the Eucharist has implications for our lives. In our second reading from 1 Corinthians, St. Paul has this to say about the Eucharist: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” The challenge for us is this: If we are willing to “participate” in receiving Jesus’ Body and Blood, are we willing to “participate” in His sacrifice? Are we willing to give of ourselves for the sake of the Gospel, for the “life of the world”? As we are being fed, are we willing to be of service?

To serve others is one implication for our lives that comes from the Eucharist. To come together, though “we are many,” is another. We cannot simply receive Jesus’ Body and Blood on a Sunday (or Saturday) without it carrying over to how we relate to the world in which we live the rest of the week! We are not just fed by Jesus. We are fed for a reason: so that others can be fed through us. We cannot repay Jesus’ gift of Himself to us. But we can give of ourselves in return. That is our call.

May God continue to bless us all, and may we truly participate in Jesus’ sacrifice.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP