



From the Pastor  
20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in  
Ordinary Time - B  
August 18, 2024

**THE BREAD OF LIFE DISCOURSE** For the second of three weeks, our **Responsorial Psalm** is from **Psalm 34** with the same refrain sung each weekend: **"Taste and see the goodness of the Lord."** along with

a few of its **23** verses. This week we will focus on one word: **TASTE**. To **TASTE** something, we must eat it - which we usually do by putting it in our mouth, chewing it, and swallowing it. While it may seem silly to point out the obvious, the history of our 'rules' for consuming the **Eucharistic** food is fascinating!

Those my age and older might recall the dread we experienced when the paper-thin white wafer suddenly cleaved to the roof of our mouth. We would risk choking to death rather than break the **11<sup>th</sup> Commandment**: **"Thou shall not touch the Host, lest you die!"** And even **God** could not help the pitiable child who was seen **chewing a Host**; **"You are breaking our Lord's bones!"** some were told to their utter horror. To my limited knowledge, there was **never** a **Church Law** **forbidding** us to **chew** or **touch** the **Host**!

**DOCTRINE OR DISCIPLINE.** It helps to know the difference between **Church dogmas**, which **never** change, and **disciplines**, which **do** change. An analogy may help: **Michelangelo's Pieta** never changes; however, our understanding of, and appreciation for, his masterpiece deepens and grows the more we admire, ponder, or study it. So, too, with the **Eucharist**. What the **Church** declares as **dogma** has always been; but when it is questioned or misinterpreted, or as we come to deeper awareness and understanding, she redefines it with new **doctrines** and **dogmas**.

**Disciplines** address practices, not theological issues. For instance, **Saint Paul** was so alarmed by unruly behavior at the **Lord's Supper** [some were 'partying' too much!] that he wrote: **"When you meet ... it is not to eat the Lord's supper, for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own supper, and one goes hungry while another gets drunk. Do you not have houses in which you can eat and drink?"** [1 Corinthians 11:20-22a] So, although the **First Mass** at the **Last Supper** was during a

full **Passover Meal**, his new 'discipline' separated the regular meal from what we call the **holy Mass**!

Originally, **Holy Communion** was received in the hand or on the tongue; in **384**, **Saint Cyril of Jerusalem** prescribed how to properly receive in the hand, which we mostly still follow. Some places mandated reception on the tongue **only** as far back at the 800's, but in the 1200's, **Saint Thomas Aquinas**, alarmed by those who rejected the **Eucharist** as **Christ's Real Presence**, taught that only the consecrated fingers of the **Priest** could touch the consecrated **Host**. In the current **Ordination Rite**, my **HANDS** were consecrated, not just my two thumbs and two index fingers.

There were, and still may be, some **Priests** who will not turn pages, touch anything, etc., with these four fingers until all possible fragments of the **Host** are purified after **Holy Communion**. Surely, I would never desecrate the **Blessed Sacrament**, but some 'disciplines,' in my opinion, go, or went too far. By the same token, I am also alarmed by the casual, almost mindless way some present themselves for **Holy Communion**. May this **National Eucharistic Revival** help us all to better appreciate and to more consciously respect the great gift of **Christ's Body** and **Blood**.

**LEAVENED OR UNLEAVENED.** At a **Passover** meal, only **unleavened** bread may be used; the **Roman Catholic Church** has kept that tradition. **Eastern Rite Churches**, like **Byzantine Catholics**, use **leavened** bread. It had been also permitted in the **Roman Church** for centuries, but for uniformity, the current 'discipline' is to only use **unleavened** bread. Current **Roman Catholic Church** rubrics require that the **Eucharistic** bread be unleavened; recently made; with the appearance of food; large enough that others can share in the **Host** consumed by the **Priest**. We use whole wheat wafers of various sizes; in any case, small, individual hosts are permissible.

Since **Jesus** told us to **"take and eat"** ... **"take and drink,"** I strive to make the **Eucharistic elements** as 'food-like' as permissible. Yet, some still say, **"It tastes like cardboard!"** - though I highly doubt they are actually 'cardboard connoisseurs' who know what cardboard tastes like! May we all pay far more attention to **WHO** comes into us through these elements than in what these elements are - or what they taste like!

In Christ,

*Father Mark*

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