

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

June 17&18, 2017 – Reflection

Jesus uses an image in St. John's gospel to describe the relationship between Himself and us, the Church: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15)

The Catholic Youth Bible breaks this out for us a little bit: "Jesus calls Himself the true vine, and us the branches. What does this mean for us? First, it means that apart from Jesus, we can produce no fruit. That is, we have nothing of ultimate value to offer others. It also means that to stay alive, we must "abide" in Jesus; to abide means to stay with or make our home with."

So if Jesus is the vine who nourishes us, the branches, how is this food fed to us? Wouldn't it be in His Body and Blood which are communicated to us in the Holy Mass as we are fed from this sacred table on the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, the Eucharist? And, if this is the Bread of Life, wouldn't it also be true that if we do not have communion with Christ, if we miss too many meals, we would starve to death spiritually?

A few weeks ago, a friend shared with me a passage from a book she was reading called *Catholics and the Eucharist - A Scriptural Introduction* by Stephen B. Clark. He writes: "We need to stay constantly connected to Christ, like a branch to the vine or a leg to the body, but we do not need to constantly partake of the Eucharist. In

this, something like a laptop computer is probably a better example. The computer battery will go dead after a period of time if left to itself. In order to keep functioning, it needs to be plugged into a source of energy periodically, but does not need to stay plugged in all the time. Similarly, we only have to eat regularly for our bodies to stay alive and have energy to function."

Last week, we used the image of an egg to help us understand just a little better the great mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Today, we consider the great gift of the Holy Eucharist, Holy Communion in Christ. If you look at your I-pad or Smartphone, these are magical and powerful tools at our disposal: they can answer our questions; show how to get where we wanna go; put us in touch with loved ones all over the world; give us the time and the weather; update us on how our favorite team is doin' in the big game; keep our calendar; show us a movie; open the pages of a book to our eyes; even teach us how to hard-boil an egg! These devices of ours are marvelous, but they are not omnipotent nor eternal. They run on batteries, and those batteries can only provide power for so long. When they get low, they need to be plugged into a power source so they can be recharged and refreshed. Without the cord that carries the charge, these powerful devices are just so much worthless glass and plastic and metal.

At Mass, when the priest utters the words of consecration, "This is my Body; this is my Blood," the Holy Spirit of God brings about a transformation in simple bread and wine. These basic elements still look and taste and smell and feel like what they were before, but infused with the power of God, they are transformed into the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation, Jesus Himself. In receiving Him, we are then charged, empowered, filled with the gifts of God to feed our

spiritual lives and strengthen us for our mission to bring the Good News to all the world, to take up our crosses each day to follow Jesus.

My I-pad, when it's charged, looks exactly the same as it did as when it was dead, but can now do amazing things. So it is when I receive Jesus in Holy Communion. I may look exactly the same as I did when I was dead in my sins, foolishly relying on myself alone, wasting away without even realizing it! But, in Him, I am a new person, I am filled with power and hope. In Christ, I can do all things.

Now, why don't you come back to the Table and have something to eat?!