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Friday's Gospel: The Eucharist, Food for Eternal Life

Gospel for Friday in the 3rd Week in Easter, and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn* 6:52-59)

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at

the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.”

This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

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Commentary

The words in the Gospel passage for today's Mass were greeted with great surprise by those listening to our Lord and were a source of scandal for many of them. Jesus invites us to eat his flesh and drink his blood, and says that this will lead us to eternal

life! If we had been part of that crowd, wouldn't we too have been bewildered? At least some of them didn't leave Jesus because of their love for Him. It isn't difficult to understand that Jesus' words are true food. But if we are told that a person's body and blood are truly food, how is that possible?

The Eucharist is a wonderful Mystery of Love that teaches us many things. We all realize that we need food to live, and that this food needs to come from outside, since no one is a source of life for oneself. And hence every human being is needy, and the experience of hunger and thirst reveal in us the longing for life. The Eucharist helps us realize that life is a gift, but that this life is not reduced to the life of the body, which sooner or later weakens and expires. Each of us harbors a longing for a life that endures. And in order to attain it, we are offered the possibility of

nourishing ourselves on Life itself, on the Body and Blood of Christ, true God and true Man.

We all know that in some way we each become what we consume. If we read certain books, they shape our heart and head; if we listen to a certain type of music or contemplate certain scenes in the world of nature, our sensitivity is conformed to what we experience. Certain food gives a special vitality to our body. And thus God himself has wanted to dwell in us, to transform us through Christ's Body and Blood, and thereby make us sharers in his divine nature (cf. 2 *Pet* 1:4). With this awareness, we approach this sacrament with all the gratitude and reverence we can muster, with the firm conviction that each time we receive Holy Communion we let Christ enter our life in a more intimate and fuller way.

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