

June 14, 2020 John 6: 51-58 & Dt. 8: 2-3, 14b-16a

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [All is Gift](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [The Eucharist as God's Physical Embrace](#)  
[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

*Fr. Rolheiser in his book [The Holy Longing](#) says:*

"By using the word *sarx* (for body) Jesus is referring to his body precisely insofar as it is not simply his sinless, glorified body in heaven, nor simply a sterilized white communion wafer in a church. What we are being asked "to eat" is that other part of his body, the community, the flawed body of believers here on earth. In essence, Jesus is saying: You cannot deal with a perfect, all-loving, all-forgiving, all-understanding God in heaven, if you cannot deal with a less-than-perfect, less-than-forgiving, and less-than-understanding community here on earth. You cannot pretend to be dealing with an invisible God if you refuse to deal with a visible family. Teaching this truth can ruin one's popularity in a hurry. People then found it to be "intolerable language" and it meets with the same resistance today." Pgs.97-8. Do you find the language intolerable as well?

#### John 6:51-58

51 I am the living **bread** that came down from **heaven**. If anyone eats of this **bread**, he will **live forever**. This **bread** is my **flesh**, which I will give for the **life of the world**." 52 Then the Jews began to **argue** sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his **flesh** to eat?" 53 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you **eat the flesh** of the **Son of Man** and drink his **blood**, you have no **life** in you. 54 Whoever **eats** my **flesh** and **drinks** my **blood** has **eternal life**, and I will raise him up at the **last day**. 55 For my **flesh** is real **food** and my **blood** is real **drink**. 56 Whoever **eats** my **flesh** and **drinks** my **blood** **remains** in me, and I in him. 57 Just as the **living Father** sent me and I **live because** of the **Father**, so the one who **feeds** on me will **live because** of me. 58 This is the **bread** that came down from **heaven**. Your **forefathers** ate **manna** and **died**, but he who **feeds** on this **bread** will **live forever**."

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** If what we eat becomes us, what do you **feel** happens when you receive communion?

**PRAYER:** I believe that the life that Christ offers me appears within the physical, not beyond it. I participate in this truth every time I say Amen when receiving the bread and wine. The message of faith is no more than one starving person telling another where the bread is to be found. Lord Jesus Christ, you give us your body and blood in the Eucharist as a sign that even now we share your life. May we come to possess it completely in the kingdom where you live forever. Amen.

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**BREAD / MANNA:** In Exodus 16, the manna kept the people alive in order that they might live to reach the Promised Land of Israel. The bread that Jesus gives now at the Last Supper will also bring those who eat it into the Promised Land of eternity.

*Do I have a lively sense of this when I receive communion? Is it bread for my faith journey?*

**HEAVEN:** Heaven was the word used to indicate the place and time of God. Unlike the world with its limits, heaven has no limits.

*What are the ways I recognize my yearning for that reality that has no limits?*

**SON OF MAN:** By becoming "son of man" Jesus chooses to enter our limits so that we could reach the unlimited. We call this the Incarnation.

*Does Jesus' humanity help or hinder my understanding and my faith? How?*

**LAST DAY / DIED / LIVE FOREVER:** Many, who limit their existence to space and time, try to stave off death's finality by achieving something that will live beyond their own lives. Others, who believe in the promise of today's gospel, know they will live forever and go about living lives that gift others with life.

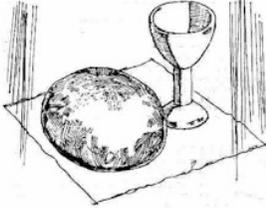
*How does my trust in eternal life help others to come to that same faith? Does my faith free me from the anxious striving exhibited by those who lack this faith?*

**LIFE OF THE WORLD:** Humans instinctively rebel against the notion that this space and time limit is all there is. The Incarnation reveals that this instinct is true.

*How does this help me to live life fully in the here and now?*

**ARGUE:** Other translations use the word murmur. In either event, each word indicates discontent and dissent.

*Do I think I would get an argument about the meaning of the Eucharist today? If so, why?*



**FLESH / BLOOD:** In Aramaic, flesh and blood was the way to indicate the whole person. When flesh and blood are combined you usually have a living person.

*Do I have the experience of receiving the whole Christ in the Eucharist?*

**EATS / DRINKS:** What we eat and drink becomes us. The message of faith is no more than one starving person telling another where the bread is to be found.

*How do I tell others where 'the bread is to be found'?*

**REMAINS:** To remain means to stay attached, like the branch to the vine that gives it life. God's word revealed in Jesus is the vine that we branches cling to.

*What helps me 'remain'? Stay attached?*

**LIVING / LIVE:** For those who believe, death is the final act of communion/living with God (Teilhard de Chardin).

*Where am I in the process of believing this truth?*

**FATHER:** Jesus always teaches that his words are the Father's words.

*What made this so difficult for some people to accept?*

**FEEDS:** In the original language of the gospel this word means "gnaw" or "chomp".

*Is my scripture study a way to gnaw or chomp on the word?*

**BECAUSE:** Jesus says he is 'the cause' of life and therefore eternal life for us.

*How does Jesus become the cause of life eternal for me?*

**FOREFATHERS:** Those who come before us gave us what they had to build on. Those who could not accept what Jesus offered preferred to look back instead of looking forward.

*How does looking back prevent me from building or looking forward? Does the phrase: "Body of Christ" help me to build/look forward?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Jn 6:51 // Mt. 26:26; Lk. 22: 19;

Other texts to consider: Ps. 27:2; Gn. 9:4; Dt. 12:23; Ex. 16: 4f; 39: 19; 24:8; Jer. 46:10; Lev. 3:17; 1 Cor. 11:23-25; Mk. 14:22f; Zech. 9:11; Gal. 2:20;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Prov. 9; 1-6; [Ps. 111](#); Eph. 5: 15-20; Jn. 6:51-58;

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Kings 2: 10-12 & 3: 3-14; [Ps. 111](#); Eph: 5:15-20; Jn. 6:51-58;

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

The Eucharist is the place where Jesus becomes most present to us because he becomes not only the Christ living within us but also the Christ living among us. Just as the disciples at Emmaus who had recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread discovered a new intimacy between themselves and found the courage to return to their friends, we who have received the Body and Blood of Jesus will find a new unity among ourselves. As we realize that Christ lives within us, we also come to realize that Christ lives among us and makes us into a body of people witnessing together to the presence of Christ in the world. Henri Nouwen

Centuries of secularism have failed to transform eating into something strictly utilitarian. Food is still treated with reverence...To eat is still something more than to maintain bodily functions. People may not understand what that 'something more' is, but they nonetheless desire to celebrate it. They are still hungry and thirsty for sacramental life. -Alexander Schmemmann\ Although we are distinguishable by our very different personalities, as were for instance Peter, or John, or Thomas, or Matthew, yet we are merged as it were in a single body in Christ by feeding on his unifying body. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on John

When Jesus gave us the [Eucharist](#), he intended it to be a ritual that invites us to come together as a family in every circumstance of our lives. In faith, just as in nature, we are meant to come together with others when we are happy and when we are sad, when the occasion is festive and when the occasion is mundane, when we celebrate new life and when we bury loved ones, when we give ourselves to each other in marriage and when we need reconciliation, when our energy is high and when our energy is low, when we feel the need for each other and when we want distance from others, and when we have no other reason to be together other than the fact that our nature invites us there. Fr. Ron Rolheiser

The Eucharist is an encounter of the heart, knowing Presence through our available presence. In the Eucharist, we move beyond mere words and thinking with the rational mind and go to that place where we don't talk about the Mystery anymore; we begin to chew on it. Jesus did not say, "Think about this more" or "stare at this;" he said, "Eat this!" It was to be an action. Richard Rohr

Who you are in God is who you are! In fact, that's all you are. Everything else is passing away. The Eucharist becomes our ongoing touchstone through the Christian journey, a place we must keep going to in order to find our face, our name, our absolute identity, who we are in Christ, and thus who we are forever. Richard Rohr

V53: *Flesh...Blood*, the literal meaning is not only repellent but offensive because Jews do not ingest the blood of an animal along with its flesh (Gen 9:4; Lev 7:26-27; 17:15). The passage may allude to the practice of [theophagy](#) associated with Greco-Roman mystery cults such as the cults of Demeter and Dionysus. If so, this may be one indication that the Gospels' intended audience included non-Jews. Pg. 171. Levine, Amy-Jill & Brettler, Marc Zvi. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 2011

Almighty and ever-living God, may I receive the sacraments of the Lord's body and blood, and its reality and power, and so be received into his mystical body, and numbered among his members, who is Head of his Body, the church, and Lord for ever and ever. Amen. Thomas Aquinas

There's a story told of a young Jewish boy named Mortakai who refused to go to school. When he was six years old, his mother took him to school, but he cried and protested all the way and, immediately after she left, ran back home. She brought him back to school and this scenario played itself out for several days. He refused to stay in school. His parents tried to reason with him, arguing that he, like all children, must now go to school. To no avail. His parents then tried the age-old trick of applying an appropriate combination of bribes and threats. This too had no effect.

Finally, in desperation they went to their Rabbi and explained the situation to him. For his part, the Rabbi simply said: "If the boy won't listen to words, bring him to me." They brought him into the Rabbi's study. The Rabbi said not a word. He simply picked up the boy and held him to his heart for a long time. Then, still without a word, he set him down. What words couldn't accomplish, a silent embrace did. Mortakai not only began willingly to go to school, he went on to become a great scholar and a Rabbi.

What that parable wonderfully expresses is how the Eucharist works. In it, God physically embraces us. Indeed that is what all sacraments are, God's physical embrace. Words, as we know, have a relative power. In critical situations they often fail us. When this happens, we have still another language, the language of ritual. The most ancient and primal ritual of all is the ritual of physical embrace. It can say and do what words cannot. [Fr. Ron Rolheiser: 2006-05-07](#)

Yet after finally hearing Paul's words in the context of the Lord's supper in which he placed them, I suddenly realized that when the apostle spoke about recognizing the body, he wasn't speaking about Jesus' body in the bread, he was referring to the body of Christ that comprises all Christians. In other words, those who refuse to recognize the body of the [risen Christ present in the others standing around them](#) during the Eucharist are not ready to receive the body of the risen Christ present in the bread. Fr. Roger Vermalen Karban

When we ask why these transformations are taking place, it becomes strikingly clear that the transformation of the bread and wine into the body of Christ is not for its own sake but for the sake of the transformation of the assembly into the true and living body of Christ. The whole purpose of what is taking place is not simply that the Eucharistic body of Christ be made present on this or that altar. The purpose is for the assembly to become more fully transformed into the ecclesial body of Christ, or, as we have been arguing here, to be taken up more completely into the totally free, totally loving and totally self-communicating, mutual love of Father, Son and Holy spirit. Take this away, and Eucharistic presence becomes meaningless. Daly, Robert J. *Sacrifice: the Way to Enter the Paschal Mystery*. America 5/12/03 Pgs 14ff.

The best way to thank a gift giver is to thoroughly enjoy the gift. Pg. 80  
Rolheiser, Ronald. [Against an Infinite Horizon](#). NY. Crossroad Pub. 2001

If you receive this well, you are what you receive...for the loaf that contains Christ is made up of many individual kernels of grain, but these kernels must, to become the loaf containing Christ, first be round up and then baked together by fire.'  
St Augustine (*Sermo 227, In Die Paschae IV*) 75-6

I am your food, but instead of my being changed into you, it is you who will be transformed into me. St. Augustine

My proposal is that we think of the consecrated elements of the Eucharist analogically as subsidiary entities. The substances of the bread and wine after consecration are incorporated into a larger substance, the risen and glorified body of Jesus. Hence they cease to be separate, independent substances. Not their chemical composition, but their whole mode of existence has changed. They exist no longer in themselves-as natural substances-but have been ingrafted into and exist entirely within another substance, the glorified body of Christ. Therefore, they can be said to be transubstantiated. Yet their chemical constitution remains the same. What they cease to be is independent substances. Their natural mode of existence has been entirely taken up into the supernatural reality of the glorified Christ. Therefore they can be said truly to be the body and blood of Christ, and no longer what we normally mean by bread or wine, since in common parlance bread and wine refer to natural substances that are not a part of any other substance. Nichols, Terence L. *This Is My Body: How to Understand Transubstantiation*. Commonweal 10/7/05 Pg. 14.

In 1210 the bishop of Paris ordered the Elevation of the Host at the consecration.

**Justin, Apology 1.66.3.** For the apostles, in the writings composed by them which are called gospels, have thus delivered what was demanded of them: that Jesus took bread, gave thanks and said, "Do this in remembrance of me; this is my body." And likewise he took the cup, and when he had given tanks he said, "This is my blood."

**The Gospel of Philip:** A collection of mystical reflections composed in the third century by those who held that they had a secret "insiders" understanding, and known as Gnostics.

(23) "Therefore he said: "The one who does not eat my flesh and drink my blood does not have life in him. What is it? His flesh is the Logos, and his blood is the Holy Spirit. Whoever has received these has food and drink and clothing. I blame those who say it will not rise. Then they are both to blame. You say, "The flesh will not rise." But tell me what will rise, so that we may praise you. You say, "The spirit in the flesh and this light in the flesh." This is also a Logos (or, saying) which is fleshly. Whatever you say, you do not say anything outside the flesh. It is necessary to rise in this flesh; everything is in it." Ehrman, Bart. After the New Testament. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pg. 190.

The sharing of the food, however, and the sharing of the personality are closely linked phenomena. Just as we want to share food with those with whom we are intimate, so we tend to be intimate with those with whom we share food. Such things are not absolutely necessary, of course, but they represent strong propensities and inclinations of our personality. They are the ordinary, the commonplace way of doing things. So it was not accidental that Jesus directed that the Eucharist be the memory of his presence among us and that he represents himself to us in the Eucharist.....If we really believed the Eucharist was the bread of eternal life and that when we ate it we were guaranteed through our union with God and Jesus that we would be risen up on the last day, then we would not be afraid to risk ourselves in human love. Our human loves are weak, mediocre, compromising, superficial, routine things when we don't trust the divine love, which has been offered to us. Greeley, Andrew. When Life Hurts. Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1988. **WHEN WE SHARE A MEAL:** 1988. Pages 19f.

O admirable greatness! O amazing kindness! O sublime humility! The Lord of the universe, God and Son of God, so far abases himself that for our salvation he lies hidden under a morsel of bread. Seeing this humility of our God, let your hearts be opened, bow down before him that he may raise you up! Keep nothing of your own for yourselves, if you would receive in his entirety him who offers you all of himself. Francis of Assisi

The word "body" for the Hebrew means "person-present." It is the word for whole real living, existential present person. ...For the Hebrew, "blood" likewise is the whole person with particular emphasis on life. "Giving" one's blood in Hebrew means literally giving one's life – and it is not even what we could call a figure of speech. Jesus is a Jew speaking to Jews. ... We know bread is the total gift of God, the gift of self and that bread is the life that it gives and sustains. "Take this bread and eat it" means make my life your life and make your life my life, "for this is my body," means this is (be's) Me; "this is who I am, this is what it means to be Me." People who give and share life and love with each other are my body; they are me. Parr, Raymond. Process Person Presence. Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1990. Pages 176-7.

The Eucharist is telling us that God is the food and all we have to do is provide the hunger. Somehow we have to make sure that each day we are hungry, that there's room inside of us for another presence. If you are filled with your own opinions, ideas, righteousness, superiority, or sufficiency, you are a world unto yourself and there is no room for "another." Despite all our attempts to define who is worthy and who is not worthy to receive communion, our only ticket or prerequisite for coming to Eucharist is hunger. And most often sinners are much hungrier than the so-called saints. Richard Rohr

I wonder if every table is really an altar. Both our Eucharistic and daily nourishment comes to us because of someone's sweat and blood. John McHugh

#### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

##### **Called into Communion**

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008. Pgs. 91-94. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2011. Pgs. 105-107. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#).