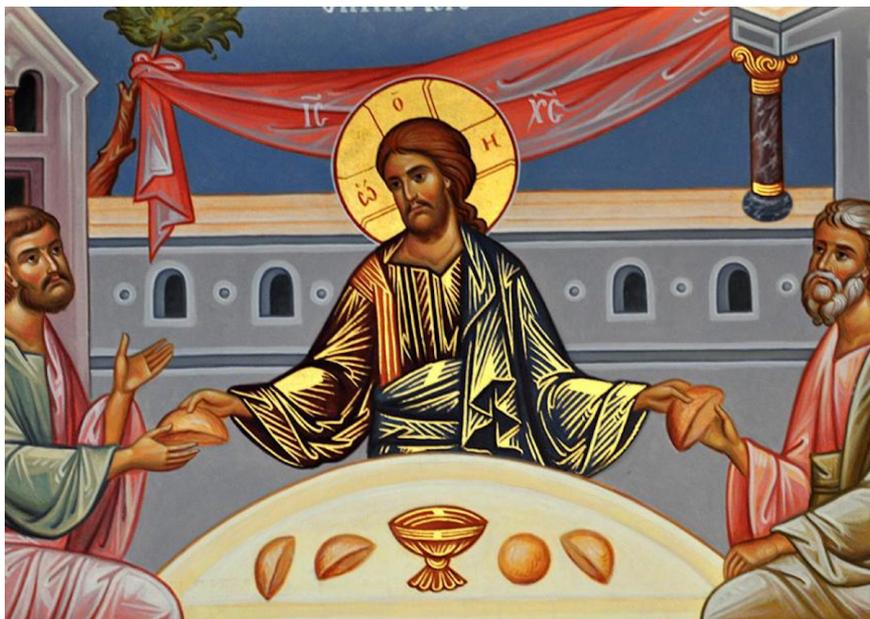


ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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LIFE SUPPORT

The Rev. Andrew F. Kline

Texto of a Sermon preached the 12th Sunday after Pentecost

15 de Agosto, 2021

PROVERBS 9:1-6 | PSALM 34:9-14

EFESIANS 5:15-20 | JOHN 6:51-58

We can define the boundaries of culture in three verbs: Humans eat. Animals, birds and fish feed on. Wild things - wolves and big cats, eagles and vultures, whales and sharks, devour.

We describe the boundary between civilized and wild things by the manner and force of how we survive and maintain our existence.

We may ingest the same thing, but it does really matter how. Humans and some animals have a taboo against eating each other. Humans describe the less civilized among us in relation to how the animals and the wild things eat. We tell each other: stop eating like a pig! You're wolfing down your food!

It is well known that the ancient Israelites forbade the eating of pork. This most likely had to do with how difficult it is to raise pigs in a desert climate without disease. But it also may have been the recognition that pigs are on the border of civilization, just barely. Pigs will eat anything. I was shocked watching a recent movie where the mafiosi literally erased the evidence of their murders by feeding them to huge pig.

I apologize for having us see that. But somehow, we have to teach each other how to be civilized. We all must learn to eat more carefully, more slowly, what is called nowadays, mindful eating. The German language is most precise. When I lived in Germany, I would hear my German mother tell her children, "fressen nicht"! Don't eat like a pig. The German word for eating is "essen". They made up a word just for the uncivilized, for wolves and pigs - "fressen". It is also used in that most interesting phrase "eat or be eaten yourself." "essen oder gefressen werden".

We read the Bible not only to know the story. We also are to read it and meditate on it. To find something new in it every time. To literally "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" its meaning. This is the essence of wisdom, the pursuit of true understanding. Today we hear that invitation:

Wisdom has built her house,
she has hewn her seven pillars.
She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine,
she has also set her table....
she calls from the highest places in the town,
"You that are simple, turn in here!"
To those without sense she says,
"Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
Lay aside immaturity, and live,
and walk in the way of insight.

Generations of biblical authors never worried about giving two or three versions of the same story. They were pointing us to the real work: considering carefully how to live in the light of God's word. We are going to have to really think about it, meditate on it, chew on it. Don't understand it? Read it, hear it, take it in again.

Jesus feeds five thousand. Jesus crosses the sea. Jesus explains that the manna in the wilderness, the bread of the Passover, will only get God's people so far. They ate that bread, but died. He is the true bread come down from heaven to give life to the world.

In the short section we are chewing on today, there is yet one more layer of truth. I hope you can hear it. It is the voice of one who wants nothing more to come into our presence to be with us. It is the promise that if we eat this bread we will be connected to him come what may.

“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.”

The bread we break and share in this Holy Communion is more than spiritual fuel, more than comfort for the soul, more even than a sign that we belong. This bread is Jesus flesh and blood, his life poured out for us. It literally keeps us connected to what is eternal.

Jesus real presence, here, now, is our life support. The church, a hospital for sinners, not a club for saints, is here to hook you up. Our lives are on the line. Come. Without it we will die. “Just as I live because of the Father, we live because of him.” You and I, brothers and sisters are on life support. Thanks be to God.

The Holy Communion is not a sign that we are alright, completely of one mind, or without sin. It is the supreme sign that we are connected. That taking it, nothing can separate us from God in Christ.

Jesus himself gives us this invitation. Who are we to turn him down. Take. Eat. This is my Body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

Take it. Think about it. Mediate on it. Chew on it. Digest it. Live!