

Corpus Christi – 2017
St. Mary's Catholic Church, Richmond VA
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What's for breakfast on Father's Day?

When my brother and I were young, the two of us often 'made breakfast' on Mother's Day and Father's day.

Or, more precisely, we would HELP to make breakfast. One of us set the table, while the other started making pancakes with the Bisquick mix. I never quite got all the lumps out of the batter! One of us flipped pancakes on the griddle, while the other would put out the sticky buns from Rosenberry's. And if we were really lucky, there was a plate full of God's greatest gift to humanity – a plate full of *scrapple*.

I frequently mention scrapple in my preaching. And after Mass, inevitably someone comes up to me and asks in all innocence, "how do they make scrapple?"

And my answer is, "It's best not to know."

How do they make scrapple? They take all the parts of the pig that they can't use for anything else.... they add some cornmeal, and enough cholesterol to close your arteries.

To be clear, I will keep *eating* scrapple, and not just on Father's Day! But every once in a while I pause and say to myself, "Mike, do you ever think about how this got to your table?"

Do you think about how food gets to your table?

Today is the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. We place food and drink on the altar, and through Holy Spirit, the bread and wine become the sacrament of the real presence of Christ himself. The Eucharist is Jesus' total gift of himself.

But: Do you think about what you're eating and drinking? And, do you know how this food got here?

Take, for instance, the bread. In order for us to have bread for the Eucharist, something has to *die*. Wheat has to be *cut* in the field. The grain has to be crushed and ground into flour. Then it's baked – in a very hot oven. In order for bread to arrive at the altar, there had to be cutting, crushing, and baking.

The same is true of wine. In order for us to have wine, the grapes get *cut* off the vine. Part of the plant dies. Then the grapes are crushed. You can't make wine without some harsh things

happening.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. And if you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will have life eternal." His flesh is real food. This bread of life. This cup of salvation. This gift of his abiding presence. That's what we eat and drink here, each week.

But, do you ever stop to consider what JESUS had to go through in order to *become* the bread of life, for us? Just as you can't make ordinary bread without some very harsh things happening, Jesus could not become the bread of life, for us, without some very harsh things happening to *him*.

Recall what happened to Jesus on Holy Thursday. He was arrested and beaten. Like grains of wheat cut from the stalk, Jesus was cut by the nails and the thorns. He was crushed, by the weight of the cross. That's how he became the bread of life for us.

This Eucharist is not food or drink that was easily made for us. Jesus knew that we would need his strength, his presence, to be nourished through life. He knew that if we were going to do his work on earth, we would need a sacred meal to strengthen us.

So he gave us himself, in the form of bread of wine and wine. And this gift cost him ...everything. Remember that, every time you come forward for communion. You are receiving a gift, a meal, that comes at a very high price. You are receiving food and drink that were created in the sufferings of our savior.

Now, it is not sufficient for us to focus on the sacrament that we are *receiving* at this table. We must also focus on what we are *becoming* at this table. Our faith tells us that when we come forward for the Eucharistic bread and wine, we are not simply passive recipients.

In today's second reading, St. Paul says that our sharing in the bread causes us to *participate* in the life of Christ. Our sharing in the cup makes us *participate* in Christ. Through this food, we become *active participants* in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Which means that there will be times when we will share in the *sufferings* of Jesus.

Just as Jesus could not become food for the world without suffering, you and I cannot become food for the world, or the presence of Christ in the world, without being willing to suffer too. Jesus was willing to be cut, ground, poured out, in order to nourish the world. Are we willing to pay a similar price?

The Eucharist reminds us that we can't nourish the world without something being cut and

crushed – and that something is *us*. Are you ready?

+ are you ready to help feed the physical hungers of the poor? If so, then God may have prune your financial priorities. To help feed the poor, you may need to cut something out of your spending plans. Are you ready for Christ to feed and lead you that way?

+ are you ready to feed the emotional hungers of the world? So many people are hungry for belonging, for forgiveness, for healing. If so, God may have to prune your priorities. To help feed the hungers of the human heart, you may have to give more of your time than you planned, more of your patience than you planned. Are you ready for Christ to feed and lead you that way?

+ are you ready to feed the hunger our world has for peace? If so, God may have to prune away YOUR attitudes of self- righteousness. God may have to prune your ego. Are you ready?

+ the world is hungry for people who will say what is right, do what is right, stand up for what is right. When people do that they often find themselves mistreated. Are you ready for Christ to lead you there?

+ the world is hungry for love. But every father, mother and spouse knows – you cannot *really* love, without being willing to be poured out: to keep giving. Are you ready?

+ we come forward and consume bread and wine. Which means we cannot avoid some hard questions. Questions like: is the soil in which the wheat is grown fertile, or polluted?

The rain that fell on the field, is it pure, or full of toxins? Can the farmer who planted the grain make a living wage? Can the people who baked the bread feed their families through their work? If we want food on the table, we cannot ignore how that food is grown in God's creation, or the people who work hard to get the food to our table. Am I ready to let the Lord disturb me with such questions?

Every time we come to this holy meal, we are nourished by the savior who gave away everything so that you could have life. And through this meal, we are called to participate in the life and ministry of Jesus.

So don't be surprised if your faithfulness leads you to places where the temperature gets hotter, and the pruning gets sharper. Think about this food, and all that the food you consume.

Think about what you're eating.